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HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

XVIIITH CENTURY

VOL. IV.

WORKS BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY.

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IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

NEW IMPRESSION

VOLUME IV.

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HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER IX.

THE loyalty displayed by the militia and the Catholic peasantry when the French lay in Bantry Bay, made a great impression on all classes of politicians. The United Irishmen, indeed, urged that the French had attempted to land in one of the parts of Ireland where the organisation was least extended; that they had sent no intimation to the leaders of the conspiracy which could render it possible to prepare for their reception, and that if a French fleet had appeared in the North or North-west the result would have been very different. In these statements there was no doubt much truth, but still the attitude of positive and even enthusiastic loyalty exhibited in so many parts of Ireland seemed to show that the seditious spirit was less formidable than might have been imagined, and that a large element of unreality mingled with it. It by no means followed from the fact that the bulk of the peasantry in any district had been sworn in as United Irishmen or as Defenders, that they were prepared to appear in arms for the French, or even seriously desired an invasion. The intimidation exercised by small

bands of conspirators induced multitudes to take an oath which they had very little intention of keeping, and even where intimidation did not come into operation, disloyalty was often a fashion, a sentiment, and almost an amusement, which abundantly coloured the popular imagination, but was much too feeble and unsubstantial a thing to induce men to make any genuine sacrifice in its cause. Everyone who has any real knowledge of Irish life, character, and history knows how widely a sentiment of this kind has been diffused, and knows also that districts and classes where it has been most prevalent have again and again remained perfectly passive in times when the prospects of rebellion seemed most favourable, and have furnished thousands of the best and most faithful soldiers to the British army. Genuine enthusiasts, like those who, at the close of the eighteenth century, were sending skilful memoirs to the French Government, representing all Ireland as panting for revolution, or like a few brave men who in later times have sacrificed to their political convictions all that makes life dear, have usually miscalculated its force, and have learnt at last, by bitter experience, that, except when it has been allied with religious or agrarian passions, it usually evaporates in words.

There is indeed, perhaps, only one condition in which its unassisted action can be a serious danger to the State. It is when legislation breaks down the influence of the educated and propertied classes of the community, and then by a democratic suffrage, under the shelter of the ballot, throws the preponderating voting power of the country into the hands of the most ignorant and the most disaffected. A majority of votes represents very imperfectly deliberate opinion. It represents still more imperfectly the course which men desire with real earnestness, and for which they will make real sacrifices; but a languid preference or an idle

sentiment may be quite sufficient to place desperate and unscrupulous men in power, and to give them the means of dislocating the whole fabric of the State. It has been reserved for the sagacity of modern English statesmanship to create this danger in Ireland.

But after all that can be said, it is impossible to read this narrative without being impressed with the extremely precarious tenure upon which British dominion in Ireland at this time rested. With a little better weather, and a little better seamanship on the part of the French, the chances were all against it. If an army of 14,000 good French soldiers, under such a commander as Hoche, had succeeded in landing without delay, and if a rebellion had then broken out in any part of the country, Ireland would most probably have been, for a time at least, separated from the British Empire. After the danger was over, Beresford described the situation to Auckland with great candour: 'We had, two days after they [the French] were at anchor in Bantry Bay, from Cork to Bantry less than 3,000 men, two pieces of artillery, and no magazine of any kind, no firing, no hospital, no provisions, &c. &c. No landing was made. Providence prevented it; if there had, where was a stand to be made? It is clear that Cork was gone; who would answer afterwards for the loyalty of the country, then in possession of the French? Would the northern parts of the country have remained quiet? Not an hour.'[1]

The danger, however, was past, and, in the opinion of some of the best judges, the near prospect of the horrors of a foreign invasion and occupation had exercised a sobering effect on popular feeling.[2] A strong

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 376. Beresford erroneously estimated the French army at 25,000 men.

[2] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 146; Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 379.

reaction of loyalty was unquestionably aroused, and it was felt even in the North, where the disaffection was far deeper and more venomous than in the other provinces. One of the ablest men at this time living in Ulster, appears to me to have been a clergyman named William Hamilton, who was an active magistrate in Donegal, and whose letters to the Government furnish a remarkably vivid picture of the condition of a great portion of the North. Hamilton was a man of some scientific eminence, a former fellow of Dublin University, one of the founders of the Irish Academy, a frequent contributor to its 'Proceedings,' and the author of a singularly interesting little work on the social condition and antiquities of Antrim. He appears from his writings to have been a man of great liberality and humanity; of distinguished talent, and of indomitable courage and energy. In the beginning of 1797, he wrote: 'I have rallied the entire body of Protestants,[1] and detached almost the whole of the Romans from the Dissenters—whom I soon found to be alone the active emissaries of Belfast—from the moment the French appeared on the coast, and in the course of a few days such a tide of loyalty has been raised as bears down all opposition. One hundred and twenty Protestants and a hundred and ten Romans have in two days taken the oath of allegiance before me; and such is the unpopularity of disloyalty at present, that my time is occupied in writing tickets in evidence of individual loyalty. The Dissenting elders and leaders have tried in vain to stem the torrent. Nineteen of the number have been driven in to take the oath under the penalty of broken heads or banishment, and by-and-by it is possible I may see the body yield.'[2]

[1] The reader will remember that in Ireland the term 'Protestant' was, at this time, always given exclusively to members of the Established Church.

[2] Rev. W. Hamilton, Jan. 14, 1797. (I.S.P.O.)

Parliament met on January 16. The Speech from the Throne announced the Spanish declaration of war against England, and the failure of Lord Malmesbury's negotiations at Paris; congratulated Ireland on the failure of the expedition to Bantry Bay, and acknowledged in emphatic terms the loyal spirit shown on that occasion, by all classes of the people. As in the two previous sessions, the language in which Grattan spoke of the struggle on the Continent bore a greater resemblance to that of Fox, than at the beginning of the war. He urged the mismanagement of military affairs and the pressing necessity for peace, and he expressed doubts of the sincerity of the recent negotiation, and a strong opinion that it was the democratic character of the French Government that made the English Ministers disinclined to negotiate with it. These two last imputations, which were equally made by the Whig party in England, appear to me to have been essentially unfounded; but Grattan stood on much firmer ground when he denounced the negligence that had been shown in leaving Ireland during twelve critical days unprotected by an English fleet, although the intended expedition to Ireland had been for months foreshadowed by the Paris newspapers. This was the second war, he complained, within fifteen years in which Ireland had been involved by England, and then entirely abandoned. 'In 1779,' he said, 'your army was sent away, and you had no naval protection from England, and yet then, as now, you voted large sums and poured out your population to man the fleets and armies of Great Britain. Your volunteers then, as your yeomen now, were assigned as your sole protectors. Two years back, the British Minister played the same game in Ireland. By a dispensing power he withdrew from the kingdom the troops allotted by law for your defence, and left you but 7,000 men, and that, too, at a time when you had

no volunteers.' 'And now, a third time have they left us without the protection of the British fleet, with raw troops, and to the accident of wind and weather for safety.' If the French had reached Cork, even though they had then met with a final defeat, this event would have thrown back beyond calculation the prosperity of Ireland. The first Irish interest was now to accelerate the peace, and he therefore strongly censured the contention of the Government, that the surrender of Belgium by the French must at all hazards be insisted on. 'It is not that I do not wish to recover Belgium, but I do not wish to hazard Ireland. The minister is now gambling, not with distant settlements and West India Islands, but with the home part and parcel of the British Empire.' He moved an amendment to the Address, pointing to peace, which only found six supporters, but the proposed intervention of the Irish Parliament in foreign politics was probably not without its effect in deepening Pitt's conviction of the possible dangers which such a Parliament might produce.

It was admitted that the most strenuous and speedy efforts should be made to put the country into a state of defence, and it is remarkable that in this respect the language of the Opposition was much more emphatic than that of the Administration, who appear to have greatly dreaded an increase of any purely Irish force. A motion of Sir Lawrence Parsons for increasing the yeomen by 50,000, was warmly supported by Grattan, but rejected by the Government. A proposal of Sir John Blaquiere authorising the Government to raise 10,000 additional troops, who were to serve only in the British Isles, gave rise to much discussion. Grattan desired that this force should be exclusively devoted to the defence of Ireland, predicting that if this were not done it would be withdrawn in time of danger, to England; but the measure was ultimately carried in its

original form, though not yet put in force. On February 21, Pelham, introducing the estimates of the year, stated that the military expenses amounted to a million more than in the preceding year, and he proposed to borrow 2,800,000*l.*, and to raise 305,000*l.* of additional taxes to pay the interest. This sum was to be obtained by increased duties on sugar, tea, wines and salt; by imposing licences on malt-houses, and by some slight changes in the Post Office and in the import duties, and he strongly urged the propriety of making every practicable economy, by suppressing or diminishing bounties. In the course of this session, the bounty on the inland carriage of corn to Dublin, which had continued since 1759, was abandoned after some curious and instructive debates, and in spite of the strenuous opposition of Parsons.

The question which was most debated in the first weeks of the session, was the revived proposal of Vandeleur to impose a tax of two shillings in the pound on the estates of absentees. Camden mentioned in his confidential correspondence, that it gave him great anxiety, as he found that 'there was a general disposition in favour of it among the servants of the Crown.' 'It was not,' he said, 'the mere drain of rents into Great Britain which affected their opinions, but the convulsed state of the lower classes, which they attributed entirely to the want of influence which arises from resident landlords.' Vandeleur urged, in supporting the tax, that the Irish debt would rise in the course of this year to little less than ten millions; that the new taxes on salt and leather would press very heavily on the poor, and that it was unjust that a considerable body of rich men should, in this time of great national difficulty, contribute nothing to the country which defended their property. An Irish landowner who resided in England, paid neither the English land tax nor the

Irish duties on consumption. Vandeleur estimated the number of these proprietors at eighty-three, and he supported his case by citing the law which prevented 'poor artificers' from leaving their country. The proposal was defended, among others, by Grattan and Parsons, and opposed by Castlereagh, who argued against the tax chiefly on the ground that it tended to separate the two countries. Grattan ridiculed this plea, and dwelt especially on the danger and the injustice of exempting a rich class from taxation, when it was found necessary to impose new and severe taxes on the poor; but Camden reported to the Government that he spoke feebly, as if he were half-hearted, and only when the House was exhausted. Forty-nine members supported, and 122 opposed the tax, and this is said to have been the best division obtained by the Opposition during the whole session. 'You can hardly conceive,' wrote Camden, 'how very extensively the determination to impose that tax had spread, and with how much difficulty I was enabled to withstand the torrent of public opinion.'[1]

On February 26, in accordance with an order of the English Privy Council, the Bank of England suspended cash payments; and on March 2, by the direction of the Lord Lieutenant and Irish Privy Council, a similar course was taken by the Bank of Ireland. The directors, however, in announcing their intention of following the injunctions of the Governments of England and Ireland, added that they were 'happy in being able to inform the public that the situation of the Bank is strong, and its affairs in the most prosperous situation, and that the governors and directors will accommo-

[1] Camden to Portland, Feb. 20, March 1, 2, 1797; *Irish Parl. Deb.* xvii. 378–403; Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 292–296; Plowden, ii. 598, 599.

date the public with the usual discounts, paying the amount in bank notes.' A meeting was at once held of the chief merchants and traders in Dublin, who declared their approval of the measure, their full confidence in the solvency of the Dublin banks, and their readiness to receive their notes.[1]

Much more serious, however, than the shock to public credit, was the anarchy which was now rapidly spreading through the North, and which in a few weeks rose to the point of virtual rebellion. In order to estimate the coercive measures that were taken by the Government, it is necessary to endeavour to obtain a clear notion of the extent, and the kind of the evil. The subject is one which lends itself easily to opposing exaggerations, and it has been chiefly dealt with by historians who are violent partisans. There exists, however, in the confidential letters of magistrates, which are now in Dublin Castle, a large amount of authentic and entirely unused material, and by pursuing the sure, though I fear very tedious, process of bringing together a multitude of detailed contemporary testimonies, it will, I think, be possible to arrive at some just conclusions.

The disturbances were clearly organised, and their centres were innumerable small societies of United Irishmen, which acted very independently of one another, and which were multiplied by incessant propagandism. They consisted of men who, either through French principles, or through disgust at the corrupt and subservient condition of the Government and Parliament in Dublin, now aimed distinctly at a separate republic, and hoped to attain it by armed rebellion. This rebellion was not to take place till a French army had landed. In the mean time, their business was to

[1] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 185-187.

prepare for the French by nightly drilling, by the manufacture of pikes, by the plunder of arms, by preventing the farmers from enlisting in the yeomanry, by seducing the soldiers and the militia, by systematically paralysing the law. But with the political movement, there was now combined the whole system of Whiteboyism and Defenderism—all the old grievances about tithes, and taxes, and rent, which had so often stirred the people to outrage—and on the outskirts of the whole movement hung a vast assisting mass of aimless anarchy; of ordinary crime; of the restlessness which is the natural consequence of great poverty.

Donegal and Roscommon appear at first to have been the worst counties. The improvement which Dr. Hamilton noticed in the middle of January soon passed away, and in several graphic letters, he paints the utter anarchy that prevailed near Lough Swilly, where he was magistrate. In one of those letters, written in the beginning of February, he describes how, between his house and Raphoe, houses were everywhere robbed of arms and money, corn destroyed, turf-stacks burnt, windows broken. He succeeded in capturing some of the depredators, and confining them with a guard in his own house, but from 150 to 200 men speedily assembled and attempted a rescue. Hamilton sought for assistance, but found that all the boats on Lough Swilly were destroyed, and that the whole country was watched. He succeeded, however, together with a certain Captain Smyth, in making his way to Derry. Lord Cavan gave him a reinforcement of thirty-two men; he returned with these by a night march to his home, found the prisoners still safe, and began to scour the country. 'The principal offenders,' he wrote, 'who are almost universally Dissenters, have fled.' 'Paine's "Rights of Man," French support, immunity from revenue laws, from tithes, &c., and the overthrow of the King and

our form of government in general, seem all to have been resorted to, as principles and topics to influence their party. . . . From common and poor men I have followed up the association to comfortable farmers; from them to Dissenting ministers, not in employment.'[1] 'Not a single night,' wrote another informant, 'has past for this last week in the part of the barony of Raphoe which is near Letterkenny, unmarked by outrage. Every house, with a few exceptions, in the parishes of Ray and Leck, has been plundered of their arms and pewter; and what makes the matter more awful, no argument can induce anyone who has been robbed, to give the slightest hint that may lead to the discovery of the marauders. Nay, their conduct rather argues an easy satisfaction at the loss, than a wish to recover the arms and bring the ruffians to justice.'[2]

From Strabane, which was in the adjoining county of Tyrone, a Scotch colonel writes: 'Unless speedy measures are adopted to separate the soldiery from the inhabitants, the most fatal consequences are to be apprehended, . . . scattered as they are through the houses of the inhabitants, who are completely organised to overthrow the Government of the country.' He states that the most assiduous efforts were being made to seduce the soldiers, that the area of disaffection was increasing with the greatest rapidity, and that, either through fear or through a desire to be on good terms with the people, the magistrates were shamefully supine. Through the system of terror, he says, 'which has in this country unbounded influence,' 'the civil power is becoming totally destitute of energy.' United Irishmen, who demand arms, are never resisted. He had

[1] I.S.P.O. This letter was written on Feb. 1.

[2] Feb. 26, 1797. Paper headed 'State of the Barony of Raphoe.'

arrested some plunderers wearing, like the old Whiteboys, white shirts over their dress. It is 'most indispensably necessary,' he thinks, 'to proclaim the whole of the North of Ireland without loss of time.'[1]

A melancholy letter soon followed, written from Derry by the Earl of Cavan, describing the murder of the courageous magistrate in Donegal. Dr. Hamilton had been from home for some days on business, and on his return he stopped at the house of a clergyman named Waller, who, like himself, had been a fellow of Trinity College, and who was now the rector of a parish halfway between Derry and Letterkenny, and six miles from Raphoe. In the evening he was sitting playing cards with the family of his host, when the house was attacked. Mrs. Waller was shot dead. Hamilton fled to the cellar, but the marauding party declared that they would burn the house, and kill everyone in it, unless he was given up. A man and two women servants dragged him from his place of concealment. He clung desperately to the staple of the hall-door lock, but the application of fire compelled him to loose his hold. He was thrust out, and in a moment murdered, and his body hideously mangled.

Lord Cavan described the situation of the country as getting continually worse, and the few magistrates and resident gentry as so terrified by recent outrages and murders, that they had fled to the towns. There were nightly assemblies of rebels. The stacks and houses of obnoxious persons were burnt within a few miles of Derry. Lord Cavan firmly believed that a rebellion was ready to break out, and that nothing could prevent it except a reinforcement of troops and a proclamation of martial law. He urged also the necessity of 'emptying the gaols of their present crowded numbers,

[1] Colonel James Leith, Feb. 7, 1797.

by sending them to the fleet, or disposing of them any way but by trial in this country, where no jury could be found to convict them, and by granting an amnesty to those who come forward and acknowledge their error.'[1]

It was stated in Parliament, that 'such was the audacity of the United Irishmen in the neighbourhood of Derry, that Lord Cavan, who commanded there, was obliged to order the garrison men to deposit their arms every night in the court-house, to prevent them from being taken by force. Above 400 families had been robbed of their arms in that neighbourhood in one night.'[2] This county had, indeed, for some time been perhaps the most disturbed in Ireland, and a letter of Camden clearly indicates one cause of the evil. 'Several companies in the City of London own large tracts of ground in it; they have lately refused to renew leases, except at exorbitant fines or great increase of rent. The consequence has been, that the few gentlemen who resided there, and were disposed to improve their estates, have been driven from that county.' The great proprietors, Lord Waterford, Lord Londonderry, and Mr. Conolly, lived in other parts of Ireland, so that over a very large

[1] Earl of Cavan to Pelham, March 3, 13, 1797. There is also a memorial from the Provost and Fellows of T.C.D. begging the Lord Lieutenant to provide for the family of Dr. Hamilton, and speaking in very warm terms of his character. A few more particulars about this murder will be found in the speech of Lord Clare in the debate in the House of Lords, Feb. 19, 1798, pp. 82, 83; and in a speech of Dr. Browne, M.P. for Dublin University, *Parl. Deb.* xvii. 411. An Act of Parliament was passed enabling the King to give an annuity of 700*l.* a year to the family of Dr. Hamilton, and another Act authorised a grant of 300*l.* a year to the family of Mr. Knipe, a clergyman who had been murdered on account of his performance of his magisterial duties in the county of Meath, 37 Geo. III. c. 62, 63. A short life of Hamilton is prefixed to an edition of his *Letters concerning the Northern Coast of Antrim*, which was published at Coleraine in 1839.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xvii. 164.

and wild district there was not a resident gentleman of 1,500*l.* a year.[1]

In the county of Armagh similar disturbances were rapidly extending. This county also had, for several months, been in a state of extreme turbulence, and some portions of it had been proclaimed under the Insurrection Act in the preceding December.[2] Large armed parties were going about the country. Detachments of soldiers had been attacked by parties of 200 or 300 men. More soldiers, and a general disarming of the people, it was said, were imperatively required.[3]

The system of carrying away untried men to serve in the fleet, which had been first illegally practised by Lord Carhampton, then indemnified by the Irish Parliament, and then formally sanctioned in proclaimed districts by the Insurrection Act, gave a fiercer tinge to the disaffection of the North. Higgins, who was well informed about the proceedings of the seditious party in Dublin, mentions that many letters had been received from Belfast, and from the county of Down, expressing a belief that this system was about to be again largely practised, and that it would be resisted to the death, and adding that the arrival of a French expedition in the northern province was confidently expected.[4] McNally nearly at the same time warned the Government, that, from daily intercourse with 'the leading men who informed the Catholic Committee in Dublin and the fraternity of reformers in Belfast,' he knew beyond all possibility of doubt that their real object was the establishment of a separate republic. The persecutions of the Catholics in the North were largely made use of.

[1] Camden to Portland, April 3, 1797.

[2] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 177–179.

[3] W. Sykes, March 3. (Newtown Hamilton.)

[4] F. Higgins, March 14, 1797.

A song describing them was printed and widely circulated, and Counsellor Sampson was writing a history of the county of Armagh in which he would dilate upon the oppressions of the poor.[1]

The letters of the same correspondent at this time, give several other particulars about the secret history of the conspiracy. I have mentioned the efforts of the leaders in the Catholic Committee, and generally of the United Irishmen, to prevent their followers from enlisting in the regiments which the Government was endeavouring to raise for the purpose of defending the country. This policy, however, was not adopted without much discussion and division. Some even of those who were looking forward most eagerly to a French invasion and an Irish republic, favoured the policy of enlisting. They dwelt on the possibility of the yeomanry force becoming a new volunteer army, and obtaining reform and emancipation by a menace of force; upon the importance of giving their partisans by every means arms and discipline; upon the danger of permitting a new armed Protestant ascendency to grow up. Many Catholics, according to McNally, actually enlisted under these motives, retaining their old aims and sentiments though wearing the British uniform. The majority of the leaders, however, took the other side. Looking forward to invasion and separation, they resolved if possible to paralyse resistance, and those amongst them who best knew their countrymen probably suspected, with good reason, that men who enlisted into a yeomanry regiment with the intention of playing the part of rebels and traitors, would be likely to play a very different

[1] J. W., Feb. 4. The writer ends by asking for money. Sampson, who took a prominent part in the defence of the United Irishmen, and who was in a position to know a great deal about what passed in Ulster, afterwards published his memoirs, with accounts of the affairs of 1798, at New York. The book appears to me very mendacious and incredible.

part when they found themselves in the battle-field, commanded by loyal officers, with the British flag flying above their heads, and under the spell of military discipline and enthusiasm. Keogh, Braughall, Jackson, and several other leaders very strongly urged that every effort should be made to prevent the Catholics or United Irishmen from enlisting. In September 1796, McCormick went on a mission through Munster for the express purpose of preventing Catholic enlistment. To assist this object, letters were sent through the North saying, that the Government intended to exclude both the Catholics and the Dissenters. Grattan desired above all things that the country should arm to resist invasion, and at his suggestion a paper was placed in a well-known coffee-house, in which those who were prepared to volunteer might write down their names. It was soon, however, found necessary to withdraw it. 'While Grattan's resolution,' wrote McNally, 'lay at the Old Exchange Coffee-house, a number of Catholics and Dissenters attended daily to prevent signatures.'[1]

McNally had specially good opportunities of learning the sentiments of Grattan, for he had himself accompanied his friend James Tandy to Tinnehinch to consult with him about a project of Tandy for raising volunteers. He found Grattan exceedingly alarmed both at the internal condition of the country, and at the prospect of invasion, and exceedingly anxious that a strong volunteer force should be speedily created. In order to set the example, he himself joined a small party of cavalry, which was formed for preserving the peace of his neighbourhood. McNally reported to the Government, that Grattan declared that the only wise and safe policy was to revive the old volunteers of 1778, with their old name, their old principles, and as far as possible their

[1] J. W., Sept. 3, 28, Oct. 1, Dec. 8, 12, 26, 1796; Jan. 1, 1797.

old leaders and organisation. Such a body, he thought, would carry with it a weight and a prestige that might repress disloyalty and anarchy, and it would secure the country against invasion.[1]

It will usually be found that men who have borne a conspicuous part in some great outburst of national enthusiasm, underrate the subsequent changes that pass over public sentiment, and imagine that under wholly different conditions the same enthusiasm may be reproduced. It is difficult to think that Grattan can have failed to see that, in the existing condition of Ireland, a great loyal, united, constitutional, and national movement, guided by the gentry of the country, like that of 1778 and the four following years, was wholly impossible. It was certain that the Government would not consent to a movement on the lines of the old volunteers, and even if it had been otherwise all the conditions out of which that movement grew had altered. Jacobinism, Defenderism, and Orangism had changed the whole course of Irish sentiments, had left Irish life with rifts and fissures that could never again be filled. It was becoming more and more evident, that while an enrolment of the loyal was absolutely necessary for the safety of the country, such an enrolment would place arms chiefly in the hands of men who were fiercely opposed to a great portion of the citizens.

[1] 'Mr. Grattan is of opinion, that the salvation of the country depends on the *immediately* calling out the old volunteers, to appear under arms on the old establishment and principles. Government, he thinks, will act unwisely in not adopting the measure. The yeomanry will be found inadequate to repel an invasion and keep the country quiet. The old volunteers, he said, would be equal to both. Their appearance would infuse a general spirit, and repress the convulsions of the lower orders. The latter would look on the volunteers as friends; they consider the yeomanry as enemies. If the Dublin volunteers are called out, Mr. Grattan will appear as a private, or in any station his friends may please to call him.' (J. W., Jan. 31, 1797.)

On the 9th of March, Camden wrote a very important letter to the Government in England, announcing a new and momentous step. He began by describing the alarming condition of the North. 'The most outrageous and systematic murders have been committed in the counties of Down and Donegal.' A farmer had been murdered for having joined the yeomanry, and many others had been obliged by terror to resign their posts in that body. He mentioned the murder of Dr. Hamilton, and added that it was the system of the United Irishmen to prevent the magistrates from acting and the yeomen from assembling. Several districts, on the requisition of the magistrates, had been placed under the Insurrection Act, and there was an almost unanimous voice in the country that no mild measures could eradicate the disease. 'The endeavour to arrest the progress of this system,' he added, 'if it be possible, is the more necessary as infinite pains are taken to spread its influence over other parts of the kingdom. In the counties of Fermanagh, Louth, Kildare, and in the King's County it has appeared, and also in the county of Mayo, and if effectual means are not taken to stop it, I think . . . that the North of Ireland will not be the only part of this kingdom in a state little short of rebellion.' Under these circumstances, General Lake was ordered to disarm the districts in which outrages have taken place. Patrols were to arrest all persons assembling by night, and all assemblies were prohibited. 'If,' he adds, 'the urgency of the case demands a conduct beyond that which can be sanctioned by the law, the General has orders from me not to suffer the cause of justice to be frustrated by the delicacy which might possibly have actuated the magistracy.'[1]

[1] Camden to Portland, March 9, 1797.

This letter, as it appears to me, scarcely describes in adequate terms the gravity of a measure which may be almost said to have placed the whole of Ulster under martial law. On March 3 Pelham had written to General Lake an official letter of instructions, describing at the same time the nature and magnitude of the evil. In the counties of Down, Antrim, Derry and Donegal, secret and treasonable associations still continued to an alarming degree, attempting to defeat by terror the exertions of the well disposed, and threatening the lives of all who gave any evidence against the seditious. There were constant nocturnal assemblings and drillings; peaceful inhabitants were disarmed; the magistrates were openly resisted, and many kinds of outrage were perpetrated. The depredators had collected vast stores of arms in concealed places; cut down innumerable trees on the estates of the gentry to make pike handles; stolen great quantities of lead to cast bullets; prevented numbers by intimidation from joining the yeomanry. 'They refuse,' he continued, 'to employ in manufactures those who enlist in said corps, they not only threaten, but ill treat the persons of the yeomanry, and even attack their houses by night, and proceed to the barbarous extremity of deliberate and shocking murder: . . . and they profess a resolution to assist the enemies of his Majesty if they should be enabled to land in this kingdom.' The General was accordingly commanded to disarm all persons who did not bear his Majesty's commission; to employ force against all armed assemblages not authorised by law; to disperse all tumultuous assemblages, though they may be unarmed, 'without waiting for the sanction and assistance of the civil authority,' if such a course appeared to him necessary or expedient, and finally to consider those parts of the country where the outrages took place, as requiring all the measures 'which a

country depending upon military force alone for its protection would require.' Lake was therefore fully empowered to act as in a country under martial law, and he was authorised to call on all loyal subjects to assist him. On the 13th, Lake accordingly issued a proclamation at Belfast, ordering all persons in that district who were not peace officers or soldiers, to bring in their arms and ammunition, and inviting information about concealed arms.[1]

This proclamation was made the subject of elaborate debates, in both the Irish and English Houses of Commons; Grattan taking the most conspicuous part in the one, and Fox in the other. In the strange evolutions and transformations of Irish history, it is curious to observe how the active, energetic, dangerous sedition against which the proclamation was directed, was represented as essentially Northern and Protestant. As yet only portions of Ulster had been proclaimed, and they were, for the most part, portions which were emphatically Protestant. 'Who are the people,' said Grattan, 'whom the ministers attaint of treason, and consign to military execution? They are the men who placed William III. on the throne of this kingdom.' 'The Government have declared they will persist in proscribing the Catholics, and they now consign the Protestants to military execution.' 'The character of the people who inhabit the North of Ireland,' said Fox, 'has been severely stigmatised. . . . It is said that these men are of the old leaven. They are indeed of the old leaven that rescued the country from the tyranny of Charles I. and James II. . . . the leaven which kneaded the British Constitution.'[2]

It was contended that the proclamation of General Lake was plainly and palpably illegal, as illegal as the

[1] Seward, iii. 188–190.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 151.

recent conduct of Lord Carhampton, so illegal, that Grattan declared that 'any person who broke into a house and took out arms under this order was guilty of felony.' This proposition was not seriously disputed. Something, indeed, was said by a lawyer, of a judgment of Lord Mansfield, during the Gordon riots, to the effect that 'it was perfectly legal for the executive authority to call forth the military power to suppress treason and rebellion, when the civil power was overborne, and the magistrates were either intimidated or unwilling to do their duty,' and something by a member who was not a lawyer, about the prerogative of the Crown 'to act according to discretion for the public good, without the direction of the law, and sometimes even against it.'[1] But the Government soon abandoned this line of defence. The Attorney-General and the Chief Secretary frankly acknowledged 'that the prerogative was extended beyond the letter of the law,' but they contended that it was justified 'by the most powerful necessity,' 'by that supreme law (*salus populi suprema lex*), that extreme necessity which supersedes every particular obligation.'[2]

Much was said in illustration of this view. Papers had been seized, one Northern member observed, expressing the determination of the rebels 'to abolish all taxes and tithes, and reduce all rents to a certain standard, ten shillings an acre for the best land, and so downwards, and to continue in arms till these things were accomplished.' 'The law in the province of Ulster could not be executed.' 'The United Irishmen, it was notorious, had more influence than the Government,' and Beresford let fall some imprudent words which were afterwards much repeated. 'They must have recourse to arms, . . . he wished they were

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* xvii. 133. [2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* 144, 146.

in open rebellion—then they might be opposed face to face.'

Similar language was held by at least one other member, and it was severely reprobated by Grattan. 'The French threatening to invade you, the Catholics refused their claims, and the Protestants of the North informed that it is wished they should rise in rebellion that Government itself might act upon them at once!' Such a policy, he maintained, could lead only to ruin, and he strongly urged that the irritation of Ulster would never have risen to its present height, but for the flagrant corruption of the Irish Parliament, and the obstinate resistance of the Government to the most moderate reform. Grattan, as we have seen, more than once supported strenuous measures of exceptional coercive legislation directed against crime, but he now maintained that the whole course of the Government policy relating to Ulster, was essentially wrong. He censured the proclamation of martial law; the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; the Convention Act, and the Insurrection Act. He described the Government policy in a skilful phrase as 'law making in the spirit of law breaking,' and he formally pledged himself never to connect himself with any Government which did not support 'the total emancipation of the Catholics, and a radical reform of the representatives of the people.'

Camden noticed that the tone of Grattan's speech evidently showed that he was acting in conjunction with Fox, and it was clear that he now looked forward eagerly to the downfall of the ministry. A curious illustration of his changed attitude was the encouragement he gave to Fox to bring forward the discussion of Irish affairs in the British Parliament. No one, it may be boldly said, would a few years before have reprobated such a course more vehemently as, in spirit if not

in letter, a plain violation of the Constitution of 1782. But he now spoke with scorn of those who described as unconstitutional 'an inquiry by a British Parliament into a conduct which tends to bring the connection into danger, and which derives its principle of motion from the British Ministry, as if the connection were not a question of empire, or a question of empire were not a question for a British Parliament.' He appears indeed to have been at this time firmly convinced that an invasion accompanied by a rebellion would lead Ireland to absolute ruin; that without a complete reversal of the Government policy, such a catastrophe was extremely probable, and that even if it did not take place, the most intelligent and most energetic portion of the nation was drifting rapidly into republicanism. The mismanagement of the war, the dissolution of the confederacy against France, the isolation of England, and the overwhelming triumph of French arms, filled him with unfeigned alarm, and he believed that, unless Protestant Ulster could be conciliated, neither Ireland nor the Empire would weather the storm. In the Irish Parliament, he was at last convinced that nothing could be done. The scornful name of 'the seven wise men,' which was now given to the Opposition, sufficiently revealed their impotence, and there was only one division during the session in which a body approaching fifty votes could be rallied against the Government.[1]

In the British Parliament, Fox dilated on the familiar topics of the subservience to which the Irish Parliament had been reduced by the enormous accumulation of Crown influence; the consequent alienation of a Northern population, 'as well informed, as intelligent, as enlightened as the middle classes in Great Britain or any other country;' the boast of Fitzgibbon, that half

[1] This very interesting debate took place in the Irish House of Commons on March 20.

a million had once been expended in defeating an Opposition, and that the same sum might be expended again; the strange vacillation which had been shown on the Catholic question; the exertion of Government influence to exclude Catholics from the corporations which had been formally opened to them; the hopes that had been held out to the Catholics when Lord Fitzwilliam had been sent over, and the fatal consequences of his recall. He concluded by moving an Address to the King, praying him to take into consideration the disturbed state of Ireland, and to endeavour to tranquillise and conciliate it by healing measures.

Such a proposal had no chance of being carried, and Pitt opposed it with great power, as a flagrant violation of the independence of the Irish Parliament. England, he said, had recognised beyond all doubt and cavil the principle that the sole power of legislating for Ireland was in the Parliament of Ireland, 'which is as entirely distinct and incapable of being controlled by us as we are independent of them.' The proposed Address is 'nothing less than an attempt directly to control the legitimate authority of the Parliament of another country; to trespass on the acknowledged rights of another distinct legislative power.' 'Having renounced all power over the Legislature of Ireland, having solemnly divested ourselves of all right to make laws in any respect for Ireland, having given to Ireland a distinct and independent Legislature, and having, with every solid testimony of good faith, laid aside all pretensions to interference in her internal concerns,' can we undertake to prescribe the laws by which she should be governed, or the changes that should be made in her Legislature? The King's good disposition towards Ireland needs no proof. The most minute attention has been paid to her commerce, agriculture, and manufactures. The independence of her Parliament has

been recognised beyond a possibility of doubt. The whole reign has been one continued series of concessions, and they have exceeded the sum of all the preceding ones since the Revolution. If something more is required, is not his Majesty bound to act, in what concerns the internal regulation of Ireland, upon the advice of the Legislature of that country? To assent to the Address would be highly unconstitutional with respect to Ireland, an unwarrantable interference in the duties of the legislative and executive government of that nation.[1]

It was a strange thing to see the founder of the Constitution of 1782 so eager to induce the British Parliament to intervene in Irish legislation, while the men who had originally opposed that Constitution, and the men who at last strangled it by corruption, stood forward as the champions of the parliamentary independence of Ireland. The motives, however, of both parties were obvious, and the two widely opposed policies which were advocated for dealing with disaffection in Ulster might both be defended by plausible arguments. The Irish Government had now firmly resolved to employ to the utmost the resources of military coercion, and at the same time to oppose all constitutional concession, and a large deputation of the most respectable and moderate of the Catholic peers, who went to the Castle to ask for some measure of relief, were curtly and decisively refused.[2]

Portland had just before reported to Camden a saying of Lord Moira, 'that there was not a gentleman in Ireland who did not think it right and necessary,

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 157–165. Another and slightly different version of Pitt's speech will be found in a report of this debate in the British House of Commons, which is bound up with the *Irish Parl. Debates* of the year.

[2] Camden to Portland, March 21, 1797.

and did not anxiously wish, that the Catholics should be admitted to a full and unreserved participation of every right that was enjoyed by their fellow-subjects of the Established Church,'[1] and in the course of the spring and summer the Irish Ministers received more than one letter from men who were certainly no partisans of the Opposition, urging the supreme necessity of dealing with this question without delay.

One of the most remarkable came from the Bishop of Ossory. Whatever evil there might be, he said, in conceding political power to Catholics, had been already incurred when Lord Westmorland gave the suffrage to the lowest and most ignorant among them, and thus 'prepared for himself the absolute and unavoidable necessity of going through with that question, and placed the Government in the situation of one who would still keep a man at enmity after having furnished him with arms both of defence and offence.' 'The unfortunate and unlooked-for Revolution which had taken place in Europe, and the insurrection of the lower orders against the higher, and of those who have no property against those who have,' furnish additional and powerful reasons for combining in the general defence all the representatives of property, irrespective of their creed. Those who argue, from the small number of Catholics in the higher ranks, that the boon could have no widespread influence, forget 'the effects of opinion, of pride, of the difference between any great body of men considering themselves as marked by any exclusions, or as admitted into all privileges; as suspected or trusted.' To incorporate the authority and guiding influence of the Catholic gentry in the existing Constitution, was the best means of strengthening it; and while the Constitution lasted,

[1] Portland to Camden, March 15, 1797. See, too, Camden to Portland, April 3, 1797.

Protestant ascendency was in no serious danger, for it rested on an overwhelming preponderance of property. 'In all the conversations which I have ever had with the Duke of Portland on this subject,' said the Bishop, 'I understood that neither he nor any other person doubted but that some time or other the question must end in gratifying the Roman Catholics,' and every reason of policy points out the danger of delay.[1]

A still more significant letter came from Cork in the June of 1797. Signs of disaffection and disturbance had during the last few weeks been multiplying in the South, and it was plain that the seed which the United Irishmen had scattered was taking root. Among those whom Pelham confidentially consulted about the feelings of the Munster Catholics, was Brigadier-General Loftus. 'I think them,' he replied, 'loyal, and attached to good order and government. I do not believe that parliamentary reform has at all entered into their ideas, or is an object to them, but it is very plain to me that they look to, and expect for a certainty, emancipation *in toto*. I scarcely know an instance of a Catholic of consequence being the agitator of any disturbance here; the promoters of sedition either come from Dublin or the North, some originally from Manchester. . . . The Catholics expect emancipation, and they certainly believe that it is intended to free them. If they did not, I am much inclined to think that they would *risk everything* to attain this object; but give it to them, and they will, in my opinion, be your firm friends.'[2]

Camden, however, was resolved not to concede emancipation; and he clearly told the Government that

[1] Bishop of Ossory to Pelham, *May 30, 1797.* The writer of this letter was O'Beirne, who was afterwards Bishop of Meath, and who had been private secretary to Lord Fitzwilliam. See Mant's *Hist. of the Irish Church*, ii. 785.

[2] Loftus to Pelham, June 2, 1797.

if they adopted a different course, he would at once resign.[1] His policy was fully supported in England. Portland wrote to him that the expressions in the letter offering his resignation seemed to imply that, 'the King's servants on this side of the water had it in contemplation to depart from the system for the support of which your Excellency was prevailed on to undertake the administration of the King's Government in Ireland.' He assured him that there was no ground for such a suspicion, and that 'not the least alteration or variation of opinion' on the subject had taken place in the ministry. He then added these very important words: 'His Majesty, under his own hand, commands me "to express to you most positively his approbation of your conduct, as stated in your private letter on transmitting the memorial from the Roman Catholics, and authorises me to assure you that his sentiments are those of the year 1795, and that you are, therefore, not to give any other answer to that already *judiciously* given by you, of having transmitted the memorial." His Majesty's servants most perfectly concur in the sentiments, the communication of which I have made to you by his particular orders; and as long as the friends and supporters of the Protestant interest and present Establishment, and the connection between the two countries, continue to be of opinion that it is inexpedient and dangerous to give any further indulgences to the Roman Catholics, so long am I convinced, that no reason will be given to your Excellency for renewing the very liberal, but I *trust* not to be accepted offer, which you have made in your letter of the 21st upon this subject.'[2]

[1] Camden to Portland, March 21, 1797.

[2] Portland to Camden (secret), March 27, 1797. A pencil annotation on this letter observes, that the two little words 'I trust' 'seem to let down the force of the sentence.'

The belief of Camden that no policy of conciliation could now be efficacious, was strengthend by the reports from Ulster. General Lake, who held the chief command in the province, wrote from Belfast at the time of the proclamation, to the effect that all the information he received tended to convince him that matters were rapidly coming to a crisis; that a speedy rising was fully determined on; that, although it would probably not take place till the landing of the French, there could be no certainty, and that every precaution must be taken. Scarcely an hour, he said, passed without accounts of the success of the United Irishmen in swearing in men of the militia. 'The lower order of the people,' he continued, 'and most of the middle class are determined Republicans, have imbibed the French principles, and will not be contented with anything short of a Revolution. My ideas are not taken up hastily, but from conversation with men of all descriptions, many of whom, though strong for Parliamentary Reform, are now frightened, and say we have been the cause of this measure originally, and have now no power over our tenants and labourers.' 'Nothing,' adds Lake, 'but coercive measures in the strongest degree can have any weight in this country.'[1]

The great Irish Rebellion of the eighteenth century is always called the Rebellion of 1798; but the letters from Ulster in the spring and summer of 1797, habitually speak of the province as in a state of real, though smothered rebellion, and the measures superseding civil by military law were justified on that ground.

The first military raid for the purpose of seizing unregistered arms, appears to have come upon the people as a surprise. Between March 10 and 25, more than 5,400 guns, more than 600 bayonets, and about

[1] Lake to Pelham, March 13, 1797.

350 pistols, besides other arms and military accoutrements, were seized;[1] but very soon there was a general concealment of arms which baffled the soldiers, while the condition of the province became continually worse. It is extremely difficult within a short compass to give a vivid and unexaggerated description of it. It varied in different districts, and it is only by the perusal and comparison of great numbers of confidential letters, written by magistrates and military authorities to the Government in Dublin, that a clear picture is gradually formed. A few pages devoted to extracts from these letters during the three months which followed the proclamation of General Lake, will, I think, enable the reader to form a tolerably distinct conception of a state of society which was as anarchical as any in Europe.

One of the ablest magistrates in the North of Ireland at this time, was Dean Warburton. He had been recommended for a bishopric by Lord Fitzwilliam, but the recommendation was not attended to, and he had a parish at Lough-Gilly, near Newry, in the county of Armagh, where he appears to have discharged his duties as a resident magistrate with the same energy and skill as Butler and Hamilton. When the burning of houses by the yeomen afterwards began, he set himself steadily against it, and he seems to have exercised an extraordinary influence over his parishioners. He wrote in March, that the United Irish movement was being rapidly organised around him, that nearly the whole population were bound by the oath of secrecy, and that murder was the penalty for breaking it. The belief had been widely spread, that the French would arrive on St. Patrick's Day. Not a gun was now to be found in any house in the county. 'From the moment the disarming took place at Newry on Monday last,

[1] From returns among the *Pelham MSS.*

every gun has been concealed in bogs and other places which we shall not be able to discover, but where the owners can get at them at a moment's warning.' Many of the organisers of treason came from a distance. Two had lately been captured, each carrying a weapon like a scythe fixed on a pole. 'After all,' he said, 'the exertions of Government will signify but little here, unless they are seconded by the immediate presence and personal exertions of all the landed proprietors. I begin to think that experience is of no use to man. We have read an awful lesson in the weak and pusillanimous conduct of the French gentry and clergy in the early stages of that Revolution—and what are we profiting by it? This part of the country is peculiarly unfortunate in the absence of almost all its proprietors.'

He attended the Armagh Assizes, and came back with the most melancholy impressions. 'The game,' he wrote, 'is nearly up in the North.' 'No juries, no prosecutions, no evidences against any person under the denomination of a United Man, the men of property and clergy completely alarmed, and instead of residence all flying away into garrison towns, the mobs plundering every gentleman's house.' 'I am just now sending off every article of value, and I plainly see that I shall not be able to hold my post many days longer. Every young tree has been cut down in this neighbourhood for handles of pikes. They are persuaded the French will land before the first of May, and they are making every preparation by collecting arms. . . . A few of my parishioners, who have been forced to unite in order to save themselves and families from destruction, have been privately with me. . . . From them I have got such information as renders it necessary to take my family into Armagh.' Threatening letters, especially breathing vengeance against any juryman who convicted a United Irishman, were industriously circulated,

and they were completely successful. Neither in Monaghan nor in Armagh would any jury in such cases convict. A system of terror was triumphant. 'It is impossible to give you an idea of how ferociously savage the people have become in these parts.'[1]

About Letterkenny in Donegal, where Dr. Hamilton was murdered, there was no improvement. That country was reported to be full of insurgents, but no evidence could be procured, 'the fear of assassination has so thoroughly got possession of the minds of the people.' 'You can have no idea,' wrote a magistrate, 'of the terror that pervades the whole country, . . . entirely by the absence of the great landed gentlemen, for where they are settled on their estates and have been active, the country round them is quiet.' The magistrate who gave this information, though lately one of the most popular men in the country, could now go nowhere without military protection. Loyal people were taking the United Irish oath as the only means of safety. No one would buy from a loyalist, or pay debts to him.[2]

From Tyrone it was reported that the people were daily growing more disloyal. The informant of the Government had tried to discover their objects. They told him they desired a reform of Parliament, and they complained of the salt tax, and the non-taxation of the absentees.[3]

At Ballybay, in the county of Monaghan, a party of militia consisting of a corporal and ten privates had a scuffle with the populace, fired on them and killed several. Their arms were taken from them, on the understanding that the gentlemen would protect them, but a mob of about 1,000 men fell upon them and

[1] Dean Warburton, March 13, 16, 17, April 12, 1797. (I.S.P.O.)

[2] John Rae, March 27, 1797; also a paper dated May.

[3] Edward Moore, March 1797.

cut them to pieces. Every man was either killed or wounded.[1]

From Cavan, a magistrate writes that, in the space of a month, a total change had taken place in the dispositions of the people. They formerly enlisted readily in the yeomanry, but now recruits were very rare. The whole population were United. 'I almost doubt whether there is one in forty that is not. They publicly declare themselves, and such people as wish to be well affected are obliged to join them.'[2]

From West Meath, a correspondent writes, that not a night passed without Defender outrages, and that arms were everywhere plundered.[3]

'Almost all the peasantry of every religious description,' writes an informant from Downpatrick, 'are United Irishmen,' and he believed that even many wealthy men sympathised with them, and that nothing but a French invasion was needed to produce a general rising.[4]

'Several hundreds of men,' wrote a gentleman from Newbliss in the county of Monaghan, 'for this week past have gone about the country under the pretence of setting potatoes, carrying white flags, and singing republican songs.' He had been told that a great assemblage was to be held on the following Friday, and that they intended to cut him and his troop to pieces. He had been living for a month in a state of blockade. The disaffection he believed to be universal, and opposition to it had almost ceased. The few magistrates who tried to do their duty were in hourly danger of assassination. A rumour had been spread, that after a certain date no one would be sworn in as a United Irishman, and that all who by that date had not taken

[1] Ballybay, April 17.
[2] Mr. Clements, April 18.
[3] Edward Purdon, May 14.
[4] John Macartney, April 26, 1797.

the oath would be put to death, and this rumour had brought great multitudes into the conspiracy. 'Were I to presume to offer my opinion to Government,' he continued, 'in a matter of such moment, it would be this, either to propose granting a reform, or to proclaim military law in the North of Ireland.'[1]

The co-operation established between the different marauding parties was now shown by signal fires, that might be seen blazing during the night on every hill.[2] The whole country about Fintona near Omagh, writes a clergyman from that town, is in the hands of the disaffected. 'The insurgents now go about in numerous gangs, swearing, plundering, burning, maiming.' 'No tithes, half rent, and a French constitution, is the favourite toast.' Last week about one hundred men, well armed and officered, paraded the streets of Dromore. 'Yesternight the hills between this and Clogher exhibited a striking scene. The summits topped with bonfires—bugle horns sounding and guns occasionally firing, no doubt as signals to the marauding parties who were employed seeking for weapons in the neighbourhood.' 'The populace are now so powerful and desperate, that for any individual to attempt resistance would be both imprudent and romantic.' There is no legal punishment, for witnesses are completely intimidated. 'Well-meaning people, more especially those of the Established Church, literally dragooned into revolt.' 'The spirit of opposition spreads in all directions. . . . Matters are no longer carried on clandestinely, but with a strong hand. . . . Nor can anyone form an adequate idea of the wanton violence, outrage, and brutality which prevail.' Every morning a fresh list of outrages is reported. A family in which there

[1] Alexander Ker, April 28, May 8, 1797.

[2] See letters from Mr. White (Redhill), and George Lambert (Beau Park, probably in West Meath).

were three sons stood a siege, and next morning above forty balls were found in a sack of tow with which they had barricaded their window. The more well-to-do inhabitants were defending their houses with gratings and bars of iron; 'but what,' wrote the informant, 'must be the situation of those who inhabit thatched cabins, which a single spark can fire?' The seduction of the military was steadily pursued, and there were great doubts about the loyalty of the yeomanry.[1]

Many lives were lost, and serious skirmishes took place. I have already mentioned the sanguinary attacks on militiamen at Ballybay. At a place called Cross-Moylan, not far from Dundalk, a few British fencibles with forty yeomen encountered a body of about 250 United Irishmen, killed fourteen, and brought ten prisoners into Dundalk.[2] On several occasions escorts with prisoners were attacked, and on one of them the soldiers killed a prisoner to prevent a rescue.

The military forces in Ireland were at this time very considerable. In February 1797 there was an effective force of about 15,000 regular soldiers, 18,000 militia, and 30,000 yeomanry, of whom 18,000 were cavalry.[3] But an invasion was continually expected, and the country was exposed on all sides. There were scarcely any fortresses in which troops could be concentrated. Soldiers were habitually employed, to a far greater extent than in England, to discharge police functions, such as suppressing riots, and enforcing revenue laws, and they were now called on to put down innumerable concerted outrages, carried on by night over an immense area of wild country, and to disarm a scattered and disloyal population. Lake wrote in the strongest terms about the inadequacy of his force. 'I believe,' he wrote,

[1] Letters sent by the Bishop of Clogher, May 9, 14, 1797.

[2] Thomas Gataker, May 14, 1797.

[3] From a memorandum in the *Pelham MSS.*

'this district requires more than half the troops in Ireland to manage it, as there is no part of it that does not require double the number we have.'[1] A meeting of magistrates and yeomanry officers in the counties of Down and Armagh drew up a remarkable memorial, stating that the late vigorous measure of disarming the people—'which, however,' they added, 'has in many parts disarmed only the well affected, the others hiding their arms'—would be useless without a very large standing force to follow it up by constant piquets and patrols, both of horse and foot, 'and this force,' they said, 'should be the greater, as the yeomanry even in towns are assembled with much difficulty and delay, require so long notice that the design is often foreseen and frustrated, and being scattered in their private houses they may (as is now openly threatened) be either disarmed or murdered in their houses, or on their way to parade ground.' They added, 'that the daily threats (actually executed in many late instances here) of personal and other injury to those continuing yeomen or supporters of them; and the loss of all trade or employment from the numerous body United, or affecting to be so through fear or interest,' had weakened the yeomanry, and that the protection of the country in a time of extreme danger, and when measures of desperate vigour might be required, could not be safely entrusted to mere volunteers, liable to no coercion except honour and regard to character.[2]

It will be sufficiently evident to anyone who con-

[1] Lake to Pelham, March 17, 1797. I may mention, that nearly all the letters of the generals to Pelham will be found in the *Pelham MSS.* at the British Museum. The letters of the magistrates and informers are, for the most part, in the secret and confidential correspondence at Dublin.

[2] Memorial of magistrates of the counties of Down and Armagh, and officers of the yeomanry, to General Lake, March 18, 1797.

siders the subject with common candour, that under such circumstances numerous military outrages were certain to occur. The only method by which the disarming could be carried out and the men who were engaged in nightly outrages detected, was by nightly raids, in rebellious districts. The Chief Secretary strongly pressed upon the commander in the North, that the soldiers searching for arms should always be accompanied by a superior officer; but Lake answered that, though he would do what he could to prevent abuses, this, at least, was absolutely impossible. Success could only be attained by surprise, by the simultaneous search of innumerable widely scattered cabins. If it was known that a search was proceeding in one place, arms were at once concealed in fifty others. It was impossible that an officer could be present in every cabin which was being searched, and the task had to be largely entrusted to little groups of private soldiers. No one who knows what an army is, and how it is recruited, could expect that this should go on without producing instances of gross violence and outrage, and without seriously imperilling discipline.

This, however, was by no means the worst. The danger of invasion and armed rebellion was so great, and the regular troops in Ireland were so few, that it was necessary to collect those troops in points of military importance, and to entrust services which did not require a serious display of force to militiamen and yeomen, newly enrolled and most imperfectly disciplined. The yeomen, from their knowledge of the country and its people, were peculiarly efficient in searching for arms, and they were the force which was naturally and primarily intended for the preservation of internal security, as the regular troops were for the defence of the country against a foreign invasion. The creation of a large yeomanry force for the former purpose had been, as we

have seen, one of the projects of Fitzwilliam. It had been strongly and repeatedly urged by Grattan and by Parsons, and, as we shall presently see, the most liberal and enlightened English commander entirely agreed with the most liberal members of the Irish Parliament, that the suppression of outrage which did not rise to the height of actual armed rebellion, ought to be the special province of the yeomanry. But such a force was at this time perfectly certain to be guilty of gross violence. It was recruited chiefly in districts which had been for years the scene of savage faction fights between the Defenders and the Peep of Day Boys; between the United Irishmen and the Orangemen; and it was recruited in the face of the most formidable obstacles. The United Irishmen made it one of their main objects to prevent the formation of this new and powerful force, and they pursued this object with every kind of outrage, intimidation, abuse, and seduction. There had been not a few murders. There were countless instances of attacks on the houses of the yeomen. Their families were exposed to constant insult, and to constant peril. The system had already begun in some disaffected districts of treating the yeomen as if they were lepers, and refusing all dealings with them; while in other districts every art was employed to seduce them from their allegiance.

That a powerful yeomanry force should have been created in spite of all these obstacles, and at a time when Irishmen were pouring into the regular army, the militia, and the navy, appears to me to be a striking proof both of the military spirit and of the sturdy independence and self-reliance which then characterised the loyalists of Ireland. The estimate first laid before Parliament was for 20,000 men, but in six months above 37,000 men were arrayed, and during the rebellion the force exceeded 50,000, and could, if necessary, have

been increased.[1] But although the United Irishmen failed in preventing the formation of this great force, they at least succeeded in profoundly affecting its character. In great districts which were torn by furious factions it consisted exclusively of the partisans of one faction, recruited under circumstances well fitted to raise party animosity to fever heat. Such men, with uniforms on their backs and guns in their hands, and clothed with the authority of the Government, but with scarcely a tinge of discipline and under no strict martial law, were now let loose by night on innumerable cabins.

These circumstances do not excuse, but they explain and largely palliate, their misdeeds, and they do much to divide the blame. Disarming had plainly become a matter of the first necessity at a time when a great portion of the population were organising, at the command of a seditious conspiracy, for the purpose of co-operating with an expected French invasion, and it could hardly be carried out in Ireland without excessive violence. Martial law is always an extreme remedy of the State, but when it is administered by competent officers and supported by an overwhelming and well-disciplined force, its swift stern justice is not always an evil. But few things are more terrible than martial law when the troops are undisciplined, inadequate in numbers, and involved in the factions of the country they are intended to subdue.

That many and horrible abuses took place before the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1798 is not open to doubt,

[1] *Report of the Committee of Secrecy of* 1798, p. 5. Some interesting particulars about the Irish yeomen will be found in a *History of the Origin of the Irish Yeomanry*, by W. Richardson, D.D., late Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin (1801). Dungannon, which was so conspicuous in the history of the volunteers, appears to have been the cradle of the yeomanry movement, and the first considerable review of yeomanry was held there by General Knox.

but it is very difficult to form a confident opinion of the extent to which they prevailed in Ulster in the spring and summer of 1797. In his earliest letters, after the disarming had begun, Lake wrote, 'I really do not know of any excesses committed by the military since this unpleasant mode of warfare has commenced,' but he acknowledged that 'some irregularities (though I really believe very few) may have been committed . . . chiefly by the yeomanry, . . . whose knowledge of the country gives them an opportunity of gratifying their party spirit and private quarrels;' and he added, 'I fear they will be of very little use if they are not put under military law, as at present they are under very little control, either officers or men.'[1] Pelham, at first at least, fully accepted this statement, and wrote a few weeks after the disarming, 'I am perfectly convinced that so strong a measure could not have been carried into execution with more temper, mildness, and firmness.'[2] In June, however, he wrote to Lake that he had heard with great regret, that many of the public-houses in Belfast which were centres of the United Irishmen had been wrecked by the Monaghan Militia, and some soldiers of the same regiment attacked and destroyed the offices and types of the 'Northern Star,' which was the chief seditious organ at Belfast.[3]

But in the process of seeking arms in the country districts, far worse acts seem to have been perpetrated. A Welsh regiment of fencible cavalry called the 'Ancient Britons,' stationed at Newry, reduced a country which was probably the most seditious and disorganised in Ulster to complete submission, but it did so by means which left an ineffaceable impression of horror and re-

[1] Lake to Pelham, March 17, 19, 1797.

[2] Pelham to Lake, March 29, 1797.

[3] Pelham to Lake (secret and confidential), June 6, 1797; Madden's *United Irishmen*, iv. 22, 23.

sentment on the popular mind. In the absence of any searching judicial investigation, it is impossible to say how much of exaggeration there was in the popular reports; but the very absence of such investigation is in itself a condemnation of the Government, and it is but right to say that there is a confidential letter written by an eye-witness, in the Government archives, which sustains the worst charges against it. It was written by a certain John Giffard, who was an officer in the Dublin Militia,[1] engaged in the task of searching for arms. He mentions that he had been present at numerous, but invariably unsuccessful, expeditions for the purpose of discovering and arresting insurgents with arms in their hands, but that another practice was now adopted. The Britons 'burned a great number of houses, and the object of emulation between them and the Orange yeomen seems to be, who shall do most mischief to wretches who certainly may have seditious minds, but who are at present quiet and incapable of resistance.' He describes an expedition to the mountains to search for arms: His party returned to the main body of the Ancient Britons, 'to which,' he says, 'I was directed by the smoke and flames of burning houses, and by the dead bodies of boys and old men slain by the Britons, though no opposition whatever had been given by them, and, as I shall answer to Almighty God, I believe a single gun was not fired, but by the Britons or yeomanry. I declare there was nothing to fire at, old men, women, and children excepted. From ten to twenty were killed outright; many wounded, and eight houses burned.' Sixteen prisoners were

[1] I suppose this to be the John Giffard, a captain in the Dublin Militia, concerning whom the reader may find some particulars in Madden's *United Irishmen*, ii. 291–296. He held several appointments under the Government, edited a newspaper, and is furiously abused by Dr. Madden as a persecuting Orangeman.

taken, 'poor wretched peasants, whom they marched into Newry, and were asked why they made any prisoners at all, meaning that we should have killed them. The next day they were all proved perfectly innocent. . . . But the worst of the story still remains; two of the Britons desiring to enter a gentleman's house, the yard gate was opened to them by a lad, whom for his civility they shot and cut in pieces. These men had straggled away from their officers.' A scuffle had taken place between two of the Ancient Britons and two members of Giffard's regiment, in which one of the latter was killed and another desperately wounded; a coroner's inquest had brought in a verdict of murder against the Welsh soldiers, and Giffard much feared that it would be impossible to restrain his own soldiers from reprisals.[1]

This letter throws a ghastly light on the condition of Ulster, and the levity with which these things appear to have been regarded is even more horribly significant.[2]

[1] John Giffard to Cooke (most private), Dundalk, June 5, 1797, I.S.P.O. The following is Plowden's account of this transaction: 'Information had been lodged that a house near Newry, contained concealed arms; a party of the Ancient Britons repaired to the house, but not finding the object of their search, they set it on fire. The peasantry of the neighbourhood came running from all sides to extinguish the flames, believing the fire to have been accidental. It was the first military conflagration in that part of the country. As they came up, they were attacked in all directions and cut down by the Fencibles. Thirty were killed, among whom were a woman and two children. An old man of seventy, seeing the dreadful slaughter of his neighbours and friends, fled for safety to some adjacent rocks; he was pursued, and though on his knees imploring mercy, his head was cut off at a blow.' (Plowden, ii. 626, 627.)

[2] In a long letter on the accusations brought against soldiers in Ireland, Camden says: 'The Ancient Britons, commanded by Sir W. Wynne, did, on their first landing, act perhaps with too much attachment to the sword exercise, which they had recently learnt, but their protection is now anxiously sought by all the gentlemen, and by the various towns and villages in the neigh-

There are frequent allusions to the multitude of prisoners who thronged the gaols, and many of them were sent, without trial, to the fleet. In one of the proclamations of the United Irishmen, the Government were accused of attempting 'by a premeditated persecution' to drive the people into rebellion; conniving at the persecution of Catholics by Orangemen in Armagh; carrying men on board the fleet illegally; causing women to be dragged from their beds to see their houses burned;[1] and accusations not less serious were made by very responsible politicians in their own names. A meeting of Dublin freeholders, in July 1797, passed a series of resolutions, signed by Valentine Lawless—afterwards the first Lord Cloncurry—in which they asserted that, 'through the recent introduction and violent exercise of military power,' great numbers of persons 'have had their houses burned, or been themselves transported or put to death, without even the form of accusation or trial.'[2] Grattan himself speaks of 'barbarities committed on the habitations, property, and persons of the people, . . . barbarities and murders such as no printer will now dare to publish, lest he should be plundered or murdered for the ordinary exercise of his trade.'[3] In November, Lord Moira, who spoke with the autho-

bourhood.' (Camden to Portland, Nov. 3, 1797.) Pelham writes: 'The Ancient Britons from their activity and loyalty, and particularly from the success of one dragoon, who, being attacked by two men with pikes, was enabled by his dexterity in the sword exercise to parry both and kill one, soon became the terror of the disaffected, and might in some instances have proceeded too far, but I have written to General Lake to make particular inquiries.' (Pelham, Nov. 1, 1797.) The address of this letter is not given, nor can I find anything about the result of Lake's inquiries. In the *Charlemont Papers* there is a letter from Robert Livingston to Lord Charlemont, describing the 'wreckings,' and other outrages committed by the Ancient Britons on the Charlemont estates.

[1] I.S.P.O.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 301.

[3] Ibid. p. 303.

rity of a great Ulster landlord, brought the proceedings in Ulster before the English House of Lords in a remarkable speech, in which he declared that this province was suffering under 'the most absurd as well as the most disgusting tyranny that any nation ever groaned under'—a tyranny which if persevered in must inevitably lead to 'the deepest and most universal discontent, and even hatred of the English name.' He was himself, he said, a witness of much that he described, and he challenged an investigation before the Privy Council. 'I know,' he continued, 'instances of men being picketed in Ireland till they fainted; when they recovered, picketed again till they fainted—recovered again, and again picketed till they fainted a third time; and this in order to extort from the tortured sufferers a confession, either of their own guilt or of the guilt of their neighbours. I can even go farther. Men have been half hanged and then brought to life, in order, by the fear of having that punishment repeated, to induce them to confess the crimes with which they have been charged.' The following, he said, is the regular punishment to which every man is subject who refuses to bring in arms under the proclamation of General Lake. 'A party of the military may go and burn his house, and totally destroy his property. I know of instances where this has been practised because the district in which the property has been situated has not brought in such a number of arms as it was conceived were contained in the district.' 'Such outrages,' he declared, 'daily happen,' and he was convinced that, if the present system was not speedily terminated, 'all hope would be lost of seeing Ireland connected five years longer with the British Empire.'[1]

General Lake, when the report of this speech arrived

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1059–1062.

in Ireland, wrote confidentially to Pelham, declaring in the most earnest language that he had never heard of any instance either of picketing or half hanging, and did not believe that anything of the kind had happened in Ulster; that he had endeavoured 'on all occasions to prevent as much as possible any acts of violence on the part of the troops;' and that, 'considering their powers and provocations,' he believed they had acted 'so as to deserve the good opinion of the public, rather than their reproaches.'[1] There is little doubt that enormous falsehoods and exaggerations were scattered through Ulster, but as little that the authorities did all in their power to prevent inquiry and to hush up such abuses as actually occurred. When Lord Moira, in the beginning of 1798, brought the subject before the Irish House of Lords, the charges of picketing and half hanging resolved themselves into a single well-attested instance—that of a blacksmith who had been largely engaged in manufacturing pikes in Downpatrick, and who was compelled by picketing, by the threat of immediate death, and perhaps by half hanging, to reveal the persons to whom he had given them.[2] We have, however, abundant evidence that great numbers of poor men's houses were at this time burnt on slight reasons,[3] and

[1] Lake to Pelham (confidential), Nov. 30, 1797.

[2] See the speeches of Lord Clare and Lord Moira in the *Debate in the Irish House of Lords, Feb.* 19, 1798, pp. 97, 98, 154. There was a conflict of testimony about the half hanging, though it was admitted that a rope was put round the culprit's neck.

[3] In the beginning of November, when it was known by the Government that the English Opposition intended to bring forward examples of atrocities in Ireland, Pelham sent over confidentially to England a list of the incidents which might be the subject of attack. He said: 'It cannot be denied that some things have been done which are to be regretted. At the same time, I believe that no army ever behaved better under similar circumstances, and I will venture to say that no army ever was placed in exactly the same situation; and with regard to the British troops, I can assure you

without a shadow of legal justification; and there is much reason to believe that in the midnight raids many persons were shot by soldiers, or more probably by yeomen, in a manner that differed little, if at all, from simple murder.'[1]

All these things naturally tended to stir up fierce and enduring animosities, and the condition of Ulster at this period was almost as horrible and as critical as can be conceived, except in the case of open war or rebellion. The gaols and guard-houses were thronged with untried prisoners, who were often detained for many months. Many were sent to the fleet, but it was soon found that grave dangers attended this course. The signs of mutiny which this year appeared in the British fleet, and which at last culminated in the mutiny of the Nore, were believed to be not unconnected with the number of seditious Irishmen who had been sent to

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that they are not only sought for by those who want protection, but even those who by their conduct expose themselves to any military rigour, acknowledge the humanity of the British soldiers.' He adds: 'Several houses have certainly been burnt in many parts of the country, but in no instance, I believe, excepting where arms and pikes have been concealed, and where the troops have been attacked.' (Nov. 1, 1797.)

[1] Lord Dunsany in the Irish House of Lords said, that if the Government wished for an inquiry, 'he could relate to them, not simply the burning of houses, but the murder in cool blood of their inhabitants. He could give them an account of three men particularly, who, after having had their houses burned to the ground, were shot by the military, whose prisoners they had for some time been; and he could add to these accounts numerous instances of men torn from their family and country, and without the form of a trial transported.' (*Debate, Feb.* 19, 1798, p. 141.) In the House of Commons Dr. Browne, one of the members for Dublin University, asserted that he was prepared to prove that there had been 'numerous instances' of the houses of persons who were not at home by a particular hour of the night being burnt by the military and yeomanry; and of men supposed to be guilty of treasonable offences, but against whom there was no evidence, being shot in cold blood. Some cases of this kind are mentioned with particulars by Plowden, ii. 623, 624.

it. There is even some evidence of a secret correspondence between the Ulster rebels and the mutineers.[1] In more than one letter, Lake complained that he was overburdened with prisoners, whom he could not prosecute with any hope of conviction, but who were notorious villains, quite unfit to be let loose or, through physical defects, to serve in the fleet, and who, if they were sent there, would probably do their utmost to corrupt the sailors. 'These villains,' he wrote, 'pretend to rejoice at going to sea, as they say by that means they will be able to corrupt the sailors, and completely settle the business. . . . I believe the whole country, at least the lower orders of it, are the same in every particular.'[2]

Another fact, which added greatly to the anarchy of the North, and had ultimately a most serious influence on the remainder of Ireland, was the growing importance of the Orange movement, and the alliance which was gradually forming between it and the Government. At first, as we have seen, Orangism was simply a form of outrage—the Protestant side of a faction fight which had long been raging in certain counties of the North among the tenants and labourers of the two religions—and the Protestants in Armagh being considerably stronger than the Catholics, Orangism in that county had assumed the character of a most formidable persecution. Magistrates were frequently accused of being shamefully passive during these outrages; but the movement, in its earlier stages, appears to have been wholly unprompted by and unconnected with the gentry of the country. It was a popular and democratic move-

[1] See a letter from Lord Westmorland to Cooke, June 16; and also a letter of F. Higgins, May 18, 1797. (I.S.P.O.) It is worthy of notice that a Catholic priest was sent by the Government to appease the mutineers at the Nore. See Hippisley's *Speech*, *May* 18, 1810, p. 55.

[2] Letter to Pelham, April 23, 1797; see, too, March 25, April 16.

ment, springing up among the lowest classes of Protestants, and essentially lawless. As, however, it was the main object of the United Irishmen to form an alliance between the Presbyterians and the Catholics; as in pursuance of this policy they constituted themselves the champions of Catholics who had been persecuted by Orangemen; and as the Defenders steadily gravitated to the ranks of the United Irishmen, the Orangemen, by a natural and inevitable process, became a great counterpoise to the United Irishmen, and the civil war which raged between the two sects a great advantage to the Government. The successful efforts of the United Irishmen to prevent their party from enlisting in the yeomanry, resulted in that force being largely composed of men with Orange sympathies; and when the outrages of the Defenders and United Irishmen multiplied, and when the probability of invasion became very great, several considerable country gentlemen in Ulster changed their policy, placed themselves at the head of their Orange tenantry, and began to organise them into societies. The name of Orange was not, even at this time, associated in Ulster, only with the outrages in Armagh. Its primary meaning was simply loyalty to the Revolution settlement, and before the battle of the Diamond it appears to have been sometimes assumed by loyal societies which had no connection whatever with the disputes between the Peep of Day Boys and the Defenders.[1] The country gentlemen

[1] In Bowden's *Tour through Ireland*, which was published in 1791 (four years before the battle of the Diamond), the author says: 'I was introduced [at Belfast] to the Orange Lodge by a Mr. Hyndeman, a merchant of this town. This lodge is composed of about 300 gentlemen, amongst whom are the Hon. Mr. O'Neil, the Marquis of Antrim, the Marquis of Downshire, the Earl of Hillsborough, and many others of the first consequence and property. Mr. Hyndeman informed me this lodge was founded by a Mr. Griffith, who held a lucrative appointment

who now took the name of Orangemen were mainly, or exclusively, strong opponents of the admission of Catholics to Parliament, though some of them were of the school of Flood, and desired a parliamentary reform upon a Protestant basis. The society as organised by them, emphatically disclaimed all sympathy with outrage and all desire to persecute. It was intended to be a loyal society for the defence of Ulster and the kingdom against the United Irishmen and against the French, and also for maintaining the Constitution on an exclusively Protestant basis, but it included in its ranks all the most intolerant and fanatical Protestantism in the province, and it inherited from its earlier stage, traditions and habits of violence and outrage which its new leaders could not wholly repress, and which the anarchy of the time was well fitted to encourage.

A few extracts from the confidential letters of the generals commanding in the North will paint the situation, and show the ideas and tendencies that were prevailing. Lake, who commanded the province, strongly maintained that nothing but the extreme exertion of military law could cope with the evil. 'I much fear,' he wrote, 'these villains will not give us an opportunity of treating them in the summary way we all wish. You may rest assured they will not have much mercy if we can once begin.'[1] 'If we had a large body of troops in this district with martial law proclaimed, I think we should very shortly have all the arms in the country, and put an immediate stop to the rebellion. I see no other way of entirely disarming the province, which certainly should be done instantly, and is not, I

here under Government. At a contested election he supported the popular candidate, contrary to the ministerial interest, which some of his great brethren represented in such colours to Government that he was dismissed.' (Pp. 236, 237.)

[1] Lake to Pelham, March 25, 1797.

fear, practicable without great force and such powers as I mention. The contagion spreads fast, and requires most desperate remedies. I think if they once knew military law was proclaimed, and that one or two of their large towns were threatened to be burnt unless arms of every kind were produced, it would have a great effect; and if they did not bring in their arms, it would be advisable the houses of some of the most disaffected should be set on fire. You may think me too violent, but I am convinced it will be mercy in the end. . . . Surely the "Northern Star" should be stopped. The mischief it does is beyond all imagination. May I be allowed to seize and burn the whole apparatus? Belfast ought to be proclaimed and punished most severely, as it is plain every act of sedition originates in this town. I have patrols going all night, and will do everything I can to thin the country of these rebellious scoundrels by sending them on board the tender.'[1] He laments that complete martial law was not proclaimed. It is, he says, 'very necessary, I assure you, though I believe it will not be long before it is in force here, as, if my information is right, . . . these villains do most undoubtedly meditate a rising, and that very shortly. . . . I cannot help wishing that we had full powers to destroy their houses, or try some of them by our law, if they did not bring in their arms. . . . Nothing but terror will keep them in order.'[2]

A much more instructive correspondence was at this time carried on between the Chief Secretary and Brigadier-General Knox, a man who, in addition to his military talents, had great family influence in the North, and a thorough knowledge of its social and political condition. He commanded at Dungannon,

[1] Lake to Pelham, April 16. [2] Ibid. May 18, 1797.

where he seems to have been remarkably successful in pacifying the country. He furnished the Government with elaborate plans for the defence of Ulster against invasion, and he was much consulted on political matters by Pelham. He was evidently a man of a hot temper: quarrelling at one time with Lord Carhampton, and at another with Pelham himself, and he appears to have been of that stern Cromwellian type which flinches from no degree of violence that seems necessary to secure the country. A few extracts from his letters will show the new place which Orangism was beginning to take in Irish politics, and also the judgment of an honest and very able man about the state of feeling in Ulster, and the measures by which Ireland could be pacified.

In March, he wrote strongly objecting to the policy of general and indiscriminate disarming. 'In the counties of Down, Antrim, Derry, and parts of Donegal and Tyrone,' he wrote, 'the whole people are ill disposed; consequently it should be the object of Government to seize all their arms; but in the counties of Armagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Fermanagh, and part of Tyrone, through which my brigade is at present quartered, a proportion of the people are hostile to the United Irishmen—particularly those calling themselves Orangemen.' If, which was not the case, the troops were sufficiently numerous to make a general search, the measure would do more harm than good. 'On the first alarm the United Irishmen would conceal their arms, and the soldiery would find and seize the arms only of those who were well inclined, thereby leaving them to the mercy of their enemies. This actually happened near Omagh.' In one parish the Protestant inhabitants, 'though not embodied in yeomanry corps, associated to defend their property, and to keep the peace of their neighbourhood. Their arms, and theirs

only, were seized by the military.' 'I have arranged,' he says, 'a plan to scour a district full of unregistered arms, or said to be so. . . . And this I do, not so much with a hope to succeed to any extent, as to increase the animosity between the Orangemen and the United Irishmen, or liberty men as they call themselves. Upon that animosity depends the safety of the centre counties of the North. Were the Orangemen disarmed or put down, or were they coalesced with the other party, the whole of Ulster would be as bad as Down and Antrim.' 'In respect to the county of Armagh, I hope no attempt may be made towards a genuine search and seizure of arms. Except in the wild country about the Fews mountains, it might do great mischief.'[1]

'The state of affairs,' he wrote some weeks later, 'I am sorry to say, has within these few days become very alarming. Disaffection has spread into districts that have hitherto been considered as loyal. The loyalists are under the impression of terror;' the minds of nearly all classes are wavering. Nothing but a large additional supply of English troops can secure the province.[2] 'Mr. Verner informed me that he could enroll a considerable number of men as supplementary yeomen, to be attached to his corps without pay, if Government would give them arms. They would consist of staunch Orangemen, the only description of men in the North of Ireland that can be depended upon. He reckons upon two or three hundred. May I encourage him to proceed?'[3]

Other proposals of the same kind were pressed from other quarters on Pelham, and he wrote to Knox in great perplexity, begging his advice. It was urged that the Armagh Orangemen might be organised into a

[1] Knox to Lake, March 18, 1797.

[2] Knox to Pelham, April 11, 1797.

[3] Ibid. April 19.

new fencible corps; that their loyalty was incontestable; that if they were not armed, they would be in much danger in case of an insurrection. 'At the same time,' he continued, 'I am sure that you will see many difficulties in forming them into corps, which have the appearance of establishing religious distinctions.' On the whole, he concluded that the best line of conduct he could follow, was to leave the matter to the discretion of Knox. The object of suppressing the United Irishmen is so great, 'that one can hardly object to any means for gaining it. At the same time, party and religious distinctions have produced such consequences in the county of Armagh, that it will require infinite prudence and dexterity in the management of such an undertaking.'[1]

Knox strongly encouraged the arming of the Orangemen, though he was by no means insensible to the objections to that course. 'If I am permitted,' he wrote, 'as I am inclined, to encourage the Orangemen, I think I shall be able to put down the United Irishmen in Armagh, Monaghan, Cavan, and part of Tyrone.' He sent to Pelham a series of resolutions, which had just been carried at Armagh, by the masters of the different Orange lodges of Ulster, showing that the society had now assumed the character of a legitimate political association. In these resolutions the Orangemen expressed warm loyalty to the Crown, detestation of rebels of all descriptions, and determination to support, at the risk of their lives, the existing constitution of Church and State, dwelling especially on the Protestant ascendency. They recommended the gentlemen of the country to remain on their estates, offered to form themselves into distinct corps under their guidance, and invited subscriptions for the necessary expenses.

[1] Pelham to Knox, May 20, 23, 1797.

They also declared that the object of the Orange Association was to defend themselves, their properties, the peace of the country, and the Protestant Constitution, and they solemnly and authoritatively denied that they had sworn to extirpate the Catholics. 'The loyal, well-behaved men,' they said, 'let their religion be what it may, need fear no injury from us.'[1]

It was obvious that a society of this kind was very different from the tumultuous rabble which has been described, and a book of rules and regulations was drawn up and circulated among the Orangemen, which clearly showed the desire of its leaders to give the society a character not only of legality, but of high moral excellence. Every Orangeman, it was said, was expected to have a sincere love and veneration for his Maker, and a firm belief in the sole mediatorship of Christ. He must be humane and courteous, an enemy to all brutality and cruelty, zealous to promote the honour of his King and country. He must abstain from cursing, swearing, and intemperance, and he must carefully observe the Sabbath. The society was exclusively Protestant, and it was based upon the idea of Protestant ascendency, but it was intended also to be actively loyal, and to combat the forces of atheism and anarchy. Like the Freemasons, the Orangemen had secret signs and pass-words, but the only object of these was to prevent traitors from mixing with them in order to betray them, and also to recommend each Orangeman to the attention and kindness of his brethren.[2]

'If the Government is resolved,' wrote Knox, 'to resist Catholic emancipation, the measure of adding

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[1] These resolutions (May 1797) were printed and circulated.

[2] See *The Principles of the Orange Association Vindicated.* By the Rev. S. Cupples, Rector of Lisburn (1799).

strength to the Orange party will be of the greatest use. But they are bigots, and will resist Catholic emancipation.' 'The Orangemen,' he says in another letter, 'were originally a bigoted set of men, who were ready to destroy the Roman Catholics. They now form a political party, and are the only barrier we have against the United Irishmen. I do not by any means wish the Government should give them an avowed protection, as it might do mischief in the South, but that protection may be given silently, by permission to enroll themselves in the district corps, and by having it generally understood that their meetings (a sort of freemasonry) shall not be disturbed as long as the Orangemen refrain from outrage.'[1]

This policy appears to have been in fact pursued, and two considerable bodies of avowed Orangemen, raised by Mr. Verner and Mr. Atkinson, were, with the consent of the Lord Lieutenant, now incorporated into the yeomanry.[2] At the same time Knox strongly maintained that Ulster could only be reduced to peace by the most extreme measures, and that an additional force of eight or ten thousand English troops was required for its security. The first step, he urged, was the proclamation of martial law. Pelham answered that this had already in effect been done, for General Lake had been furnished with all the powers that martial law could give him, when he was authorised to act without the civil magistrate; but Knox very justly replied that this position was not tenable. 'Two distinct laws of contrary nature cannot exist at the same moment. The judges are now on the circuit. The magistrates are in possession of their powers. There

[1] Knox to Pelham, May 21, 22, 28, 1797. The Orange resolutions will be found in the I.S.P.O.

[2] Pelham to Knox, May 26, 1797.

is not an act committed by a soldier for which he is not answerable to civil law. General Lake can have no authority to proclaim martial law. The order must come from the Lord Lieutenant and Council. All civil power then ceases. The military commanding officer has power of life and death, with or without court-martial. He may give his soldiers free quarters. He may lay waste districts, and take such measures of coercion as he may think proper, without being amenable to any tribunal for his conduct. Nothing less than this authority, with a powerful British force, will ever disarm and subdue the North of Ireland. . . . The present system is that of irritation, and the rebels are getting confidence, arms, and accession of numbers.' 'Nothing but authority, to the military to make war upon property till the arms and ammunition are given up, will answer. It must be resorted to, or the country will remain in a state of smothered war. If the only object of the British Government were to settle Ireland, it might be done in two months.' [1]

This last sentence was somewhat enigmatical, and in reply to an inquiry of Pelham, Knox developed his views in a letter which shows clearly how powerfully the example of the French Revolution was acting on the loyal as well as on the disloyal. 'The country,' he wrote, 'never can be settled until it is disarmed, and that is only to be done by terror . . . authorising the general officers to declare war upon property until the surrender is made. Arms may be hid, ringleaders may conceal themselves, but houses and barns cannot be removed. In every other species of warfare the assailing army has the disadvantage against a hostile people. The bloody scenes of La Vendée would not have happened, had the French Convention adopted immediately

[1] Knox to Pelham, April 19, May 22, 1797.

that mode of attack. When Hoche did act, the rebellion was at an end.' 'It appears to me,' however, he added, 'that our British Ministers have, at this moment, an object more material to the Empire than the immediate settlement of Ireland, viz. a peace, the negotiation of which might be impeded by a public avowal that Ireland was in rebellion, and I do not know how far the ministers would think it prudent to risk so bold a step, which, perhaps, in the opinion of England, success even could not justify.'[1]

It would, however, be a great injustice to General Knox to suppose that he had no other remedies to suggest, or that he regarded the evil as a mere passing malady which could be easily dispelled. 'The present,' he writes, 'is a contest of the poor against the rich, and of the Irishman against the British Government. Many foolish men of property have joined in the rebellion from the latter motive, but the loyalty of every Irishman who is unconnected with property is artificial.'[2] To deal with this condition of society great organic changes appeared to him necessary, and his views seem to have coincided remarkably with those which were adopted by Pitt. 'As long as there are two distinct Legislatures in England and Ireland, no measures can be adopted to procure a solid peace between them. The great object should therefore be an Union, to obtain which is now within our reach. The first step is by strong military coercion to subdue the people; and while Ireland is yet full of British or foreign troops, to

[1] Knox to Pelham, May 28, 1797. This letter, and one of Lake's which I have quoted (p. 50), will show that there was some colour of plausibility in the reports, at this time industriously circulated, that persons about the Government were urging that the town of Belfast should be burnt to the ground. See *Historical Collections relating to Belfast*, p. 453.

[2] Knox to Pelham, April 14, 1797.

offer the people parliamentary reform; emancipation of Catholics; abolition of sinecure places &c. &c. on condition of their acceding to an Union; thereby subduing the aristocracy with the assistance of the people. One hundred members of Parliament freely chosen by the counties and principal towns of Ireland, would not operate upon the British House of Commons. By reducing the number of both Houses of Parliament, the minister would be enabled to offer such sacrifices as would be acceptable to the people. The venality of the Irish aristocracy is of more detriment to the British Government here, and of more annoyance to the British Minister, than a few Democrats, chosen perhaps by Belfast and Newry and two or three other towns, could possibly be in a joint Parliament of the two countries. I shall now point out one popular and just law which, at a future period, it would be desirable to pass—for now all laws of concession would have a bad effect. This law is to oblige all landlords in letting leases to give a preference of ten per cent. to the old tenant. . . . I think the interest of Great Britain, of Ireland, and of the Empire, is first to subdue the people of the North of Ireland; secondly, to subdue the aristocracy of Ireland, and force an Union. Within my memory, the measures of England towards this country have been to remove an existing difficulty without looking forward. It is time to put a stop to the jarring of the two countries; to adopt a plan, and pursue it with perseverance, to obtain an Union of the two Legislatures.'[1]

Pelham, referring to a passing allusion to the Catholic question in one of the letters of Knox, begged the General to write frankly to him on that question, for although, he said, the time was not propitious to

[1] Knox to Pelham, April 19, 1797.

any discussion of it in Parliament, yet 'every man who interests himself about the country must look to some permanent settlement beyond the mere suppression of the existing rebellion, and therefore must be discussing, in his own mind at least, the situation of the different religious sects.'[1]

'The mass of the Roman Catholics of Ireland,' answered Knox, 'feel little interest in the question of Catholic emancipation. It is of consequence only to the Catholics of property, of whom there are very few in Ulster. When the question was started, and Catholic emancipation supported by the Presbyterians of the North, it failed of the effect of rousing the lower order of Roman Catholics, and the Republicans were therefore obliged to throw in the bait of abolition of tithes and reduction of rents. This has completely answered the purpose, and the whole mass of the Catholics of Ulster are United Irishmen. The effect of Catholic emancipation unaccompanied by complete parliamentary reform, would be the loss of the whole body of Orangemen, without the acquisition of the Catholics. The Presbyterians would tell them it was a mockery. . . . In my letter written some time ago, I ventured to give an opinion that Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform should be reserved as *douceurs* to the people of Ireland to agree to an Union of the Legislatures of the two countries. The interest of the aristocracy and of the city of Dublin alone oppose an Union. The former are now of no weight, and the latter deserves punishment. I look upon it that Ireland must soon stand in respect to England in one of these three situations—united with her, the Legislatures being joined; separated from her, and forming a republic, or as a half-subdued province.'[2]

[1] Pelham to Knox, May 26, 1797.

[2] Knox to Pelham, May 28, 1797. The reader will not ce a

The views which were expressed in these remarkable letters, appear to me to have been very much those which were held in the last years of the eighteenth century by some of the ablest men connected with the Government. In the correspondence of this time, the magistrates and gentry in the North of Ireland are constantly spoken of with great severity. They are represented as flying from their estates to the towns, or as remaining passive in the midst of the popular outrages, and Dean Warburton in more than one letter compares their conduct to that of the French gentry in the earlier stages of the Revolution. There were, indeed, a few conspicuous exceptions. Lord Downshire and Lord Cavan were specially noted for their zeal and courage; Charlemont, though his health was now much broken, hastened, in a manner which the Chief Secretary recognised as extremely honourable to him, to use his influence in the cause of order, even under a Government from which he was wholly separated;[1] and other men in less prominent positions took the same course. But in general, Lake pronounced that 'the system of terror practised by the United Irishmen' had 'completely destroyed all ideas of exertion in most of the magistrates and gentry throughout the country.'[2]

striking and instructive analogy to contemporary history. In our day it has been found that an agitation, based on purely Nationalist grounds, signally failed to rouse the farming classes; and the Nationalist leaders accordingly adopted with success the plan of connecting with it an attack on rents.

[1] 'Lord Charlemont and Connolly have offered their services in the handsomest manner. The former is going down to Armagh with his son, Lord Caulfield, having accepted a commission of captain, which is a circumstance peculiarly advantageous to Government and honourable to him, as he was a general in the corps of volunteers; and he has been, on this occasion, desired to take the command of two counties.' (Pelham to the Duke of York, Sept. 22, 1796.)

[2] Lake to Pelham, March 21, 1797.

The fact is especially remarkable when it is remembered what a prominent part the Ulster gentlemen had taken twenty years before in organising the volunteers, and how admirably they had then secured the province not only from invasion, but also from internal disorder. It is possible that some considerable moral and political decadence may have set in among them, but it is at least certain that the spread of republican ideas had enormously aggravated the situation. A country gentleman, in a wild district, who could no longer count upon the support of his tenantry, was almost helpless in the midst of the armed anarchy that was surging around him, and he had the strongest motives to avoid as much as possible a conflict with his people. Every active magistrate was in constant, immediate danger of murder, and in the forecast of events the separation of Ireland from England seemed now extremely probable. The landing of any considerable French force in Ulster would almost certainly have effected it, and it was not, perhaps, astonishing that many men of influence and property should have hesitated under these circumstances to hazard everything they possessed in the defence of a Government which had taken the administration of affairs out of their hands, and which was pursuing a policy that they regarded as absolutely ruinous. Pelham had not only permitted, but expressly directed the military authorities to act without the participation or advice of the civil magistrates,[1] and there are many indications that the resolution of the Government to resist every degree of parliamentary reform was highly displeasing to the Irish gentry, and

[1] 'Your instructions about employing the military without the assistance of the civil power, were perfectly explicit. I have ever acted since I received them, without calling upon a magistrate, from being too well acquainted with their indecision and timidity.' (Lake to Pelham, April 16, 1797.)

especially to the Northern gentry, who had so long supported Grattan in the cause.

Lord Blayney, who at the head of a regiment of militia or yeomanry was one of the most active men engaged in pacifying Ulster, wrote very earnestly to Pelham disclaiming any wish to oppose or embarrass the ministry, but at the same time expressing his conviction, that 'some plan might be struck out which would satisfy the moderate party,' and that it would be then possible 'to obtain information against the Jacobins.' Such a reform, he said, might prevent a revolution, not only in the North, but in other parts of the kingdom, and it ought to consist of opening the close boroughs, with compensation to the owners, and of a material reduction in the number of placemen and pensioners.[1] Another informant warned the Government, that multitudes of the rich of the middle classes were avowedly United Irishmen, and that many of the principal gentry inclined that way.[2] 'Men who have hitherto reprobated the conduct of the disaffected,' wrote a very active magistrate, 'have totally changed their sentiments, and now avow that concessions must be made, and that the reasonable requests of the people for the reform of Parliament being refused has been the sole cause of the distracted state we are in.'[3] 'I have good reason to believe,' said another magistrate, 'that many respectable, well-intending people, who are connected with this uniting, would be glad of any good apology to withdraw from it, but they are pledged in such a way that they cannot, unless some reform is proposed by Government.'[4]

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[1] Lord Blayney to Pelham, May 1.

[2] John Macartney, April 26.

[3] Andrew Newton (Croagh), May 3.

[4] Alexander Ker, May 8, 1797. To these testimonies I may add that of McNally. 'I find many among those who have been long considered aristocrats, decidedly

There was at the same time an evident desire among many magistrates to mitigate the severity of martial law, and there were complaints of the facility with which they permitted persons under suspicion of disaffection to take the oath of allegiance, and then gave them certificates without exacting a surrender of arms.[1] It is melancholy to observe, Camden wrote, that 'the more respectable part of the inhabitants of the northern counties and the gentlemen are so blind to their own interests . . . that they are beginning to talk the language of encouragement to the pretended principles of the United Irishmen.'[2] In the very Protestant county of Armagh, at a large meeting convened by the High Sheriff and attended by the principal freeholders of the county, an address to the King of the most violent character was carried. It declared that the British Constitution in Ireland was enjoyed only in name; that a system of organised corruption had been established, which made the Irish Parliament a mere passive instrument in the hands of the English Cabinet; that the people were being goaded to madness by accumulated oppressions; that in the richest and most prosperous province of Ireland, military coercion had taken the place of common law, and useful citizens were dragged to the fleet without trial by jury, like the most atrocious felons. Most of these evils, the petitioners said, would have been prevented if the people had been fairly and adequately represented in Parliament; and they added, that the restrictions still maintained upon

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for parliamentary reform. . . . Many, very many, among the yeomanry, and particularly among the attorneys' and lawyers' corps, though they do not hint it in the aggregate, yet individually and in private conversation speak of their arms as a means of obtaining reform.' (J. W., Feb. 9, 1797.)

[1] Knox to Pelham, June 16, 1797.

[2] Camden to Portland (most secret), April 13.

the Catholics were disgraceful to the age, and that the Government had been deliberately propagating religious animosities and persecutions. Addresses and resolutions of a very similar character came from the freeholders of the great Protestant county of Antrim; from the King's County and the county of Kildare; from the cities of Dublin and Cork; from the Whig Club and from the Bar.[1] The Duke of Leinster protested against the military law in Ulster by giving up his command of the Kildare Militia, and was soon after removed from his post of Clerk of the Hanaper. Lord Bellamont retired from the Cavan Militia, and Grattan resigned his position in the yeomanry.[2]

These signs were very serious, and they appear to me to show clearly that the Government, though supported almost unanimously by the Irish Parliament, was not carrying with it the genuine sentiments of the Irish gentry. Thomas Emmet, in speaking of this period in his evidence before the Secret Committee in August 1798, most solemnly declared, that if after the Bantry Bay expedition there had been any reasonable hope of reform being adopted, he had determined to propose to the Executive Committee of the United Irishmen, that a messenger should be sent to France to say that the differences between the people and the Government were adjusted, and to ask that no second invasion might be attempted, and he added that he was certain his resolution would have been carried.[3] How far a moderate measure of reform, such as that

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 293–301.

[2] Camden to Portland, April 28, 1797. (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 304.) Among the papers of the United Irishmen published by the Secret Committee of 1798 (Appendix, No. II.) there is a list of contributions headed by the curious item, 'Received from the aristocrats of Belfast, 374*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*'

[3] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish Hist.* p. 215.

which was proposed by Ponsonby and Grattan, could still have prevented the rebellion, it is of course impossible to say. Republicanism and anarchy, and a passion for a pure democracy, which in Ireland would mean a revolution of property, had spread very far. But the policy of Grattan would almost certainly have detached from the United Irishmen a great number of the ablest and most energetic leaders; it would have given many others, who were alarmed at the approach of civil war, and at the prolonged and demoralising anarchy, a pretext to drop away; and it is difficult to believe that some compromise might not have been devised, as long as the chief seat of disaffection was the province in which an intelligent and industrious Protestant population predominated.

The Government, however, thought otherwise. It appears to me very probable that the intention to carry an Union was one of their leading motives, and the ideas of Irish policy which we have seen a few years before, in the letters of Lord Westmorland, were still in the ascendant. 'The severity of the measure which has been pursued in the North,' wrote Camden to Portland, 'is much descanted upon in both Houses of Parliament in England. My doubt is whether, if the measure of severity was right, that which has been adopted is severe enough. The only alternative in the present conjuncture of affairs, therefore, which it appears possible to consider, is whether you shall grant to a disaffected people that boon, the want of which they pretend is the cause of their discontent. In the province of Ulster there are certainly several most respectable persons who look to a change in the representation as an object of just expectation. These would be contented with a moderate reform in Parliament, but that must be upon the narrow scale of excluding all those Catholics who are not by the present law entitled to

vote. None of these persons will venture to say that the mass of the Reformists (*sic*) in the North will be satisfied with so limited a change, and no one can say that it will give any relief and satisfaction to the Catholics. I conceive it, therefore, to be necessary to connect together both the questions of Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation, and to consider if it would be advisable (which must be the case if both measures are adopted) to change the system upon which Ireland has been governed for many years. There are certainly objections to the present Constitution of Ireland. It is a subject of complaint, that individuals have so much influence in the decisions of Parliament; but as long as Ireland remains under circumstances to be useful to England, my opinion is that she must be governed by an English party. There must be such an engine to counteract that jealousy which will always be entertained of the principal seat of empire, and I am convinced that you cannot let the Catholics into a participation of political power without looking to a change in all the establishments of the country. The narrow sphere in which the more enlightened and better educated persons move in this country, and the uninformed state in which many of the lower orders live, render the first not fit to govern, and the last not fit to be trusted with the right to elect; and illiberal as the opinion may be construed to be, I am convinced it would be very dangerous to attempt to govern Ireland in a more popular manner than the present.'[1]

'The change which has taken place within the last fortnight,' he wrote shortly after, 'has, I confess, surprised and alarmed me, and the rather, as impressions appear to have been made upon the minds of the better description of persons, and particularly of some

[1] Camden to Portland (private and secret), April 3, 1797.

gentlemen of independent principles and conduct.' 'I think that I perceive a different sensation in the country, but I fear it is one even more alarming to Government. A better description of persons, and some gentlemen, have been led into the adoption of the principles of the United Irishmen as far as Reform and Catholic Emancipation. They have also joined in the wish for a change of government. . . . I think it more formidable to good order than the other system, because as long as the gentlemen remained united against these societies, and the military were uncorrupted, the danger was not very formidable; but since an impression appears to have been made upon the better description of persons in some parts of the country, I conceive the points of Reform and Emancipation, which are extremely dangerous, and which they mean to attempt to carry, may more probably be adopted; and I also conceive it to be very questionable, whether, when once the gentry have given themselves up to these associations, they will be able to counteract their more extended and dangerous intentions.'[1]

The policy of the Irish Government was acquiesced in in England, but not without misgiving. Portland again asked confidentially whether something might not be done for the Catholics, which would break their alliance with the Dissenters, secure their 'cordial exertions in support of the present establishment,' or, at least, baffle all attempts to set up a republican government,[2] but Camden gave him no encouragement. 'Whether his Majesty should be advised,' he wrote, 'to accede to, or withhold, any concessions, which are made the excuse for rebellion, or not, that rebellion which it has excited, should be overcome if possible. It will

[1] Camden to Portland (private and secret), April 22, 28, 1797.
[2] Portland to Camden (secret and confidential), May 19, 1797.

afterwards be a subject of consideration, in what manner this country is to be governed. As long as it remains upon its present establishment, I fear it will be found a most troublesome appendage to England in times of difficulty.' It appeared to the Lord Lieutenant, that a measure in favour of the Catholics, would be 'merely an expedient to avert a present danger, and that the country should either be governed according to its present system, or that a change more extensive must be adopted.' 'I cannot conceal from your grace,' he continued, 'with how melancholy a presage I consider the system to which we appear to have been forced, of yielding to the demands of persons who have arms in their hands.'[1]

The question was once more introduced by Ponsonby into the Irish House of Commons, on May 15, in a series of resolutions, asserting that it was necessary 'to a fundamental reform of the representation that all disabilities on account of religion be for ever abolished, and that Catholics shall be admitted into the Legislature and all the great offices of State, in the same extent as Protestants now are,' 'that it is the indispensable right of the people of Ireland to be fully and fairly represented in Parliament,' that 'the privilege of returning members for cities, boroughs &c. in the present form, shall cease; that each county shall be divided into districts, consisting of 6,000 houses each, each district to return two members of Parliament.' He proposed that all persons who possessed freehold property to the amount of 40*l.* per annum; all who possessed leasehold interests, or houses, of a value which was to be subsequently determined by Parliament; all freemen of cities, and all who had resided in a city for a certain number of years, following a trade, should be

[1] Camden to Portland (private), May 18, 1707.

entitled to vote. The duration of Parliament was to be reserved for further consideration.

The Government met these proposals by an adjournment, arguing that a time of war, and tumult, and seditious conspiracy, was very unsuitable for their discussion, and that no constitutional measures could meet the demands of a party which was plainly revolutionary and republican. On the other hand, it was contended that nothing but a measure of reasonable reform, which might satisfy the moderate reformers, could check revolutionary propagandism, and save the country from the horrors of rebellion. In the course of the debate, one member quoted these pregnant lines, from a private letter, which he had received two years before, from Burke. 'Against Jacobinism, this grand and dreadful evil of our times (I do not love to cheat myself or others), I do not know any solid security whatsoever; but I am certain that what will come nearest to it, is to interest as many as you can in the present order of things; to interest them religiously, civilly, politically, by all the ties and principles by which men are held.'

Grattan spoke on this subject with great power and with great bitterness. Most of his speech consisted of a restatement of facts, which, by this time, must have become very familiar to my readers—that in a Parliament of 300 members, more than 200 were returned by venal and close boroughs; that of all the towns and cities of Ireland, not more than twelve were free; that, by means of the nomination boroughs, the minister, who was himself the representative of the Cabinet of another country, had a permanent and overwhelming ascendency in the Parliament of Ireland; that this borough system was not a part of the ancient Constitution, but had been mainly created by the Stuarts for the express purpose of securing the subserviency of Parliament, and that it was largely responsible for the

commercial disabilities, the penal laws, and the long extinction of parliamentary liberties. The plan before the House, he said, goes to the root of the evil, and is no half measure. It would make the House of Commons what it ought to be—a real representation of the people. But if it gave votes to population, it was only to population 'mixed with property and annexed to residence.' If Parliament thought fit to give votes to 40*s.* freeholders, why should they exclude from the franchise farmers for years, householders and leaseholders of a higher amount, and established and resident tradesmen? There are members, who seem to think 'that the mass of property should be as little represented as the mass of population; that representation should be founded on neither, but should itself be what it is—a property and a commerce.'

Turning to the objections that were drawn from the war and insurrection, he reminded the House that reform had been equally resisted when it was brought forward in time of peace. 'There are two periods, it seems, in which reform should not be agitated; one is the period of war, and the other is that of peace. . . . You will never persuade a borough majority that it is seasonable for them to surrender their borough interest.' 'With respect to insurrection, the original cause of discontent is to be found in the inadequate representation of our people,' and that discontent can only be removed by a removal of the cause. The ministers argued from the report of the Secret Committee, that the real object of the United Irish leaders was not reform, but separation and a republic, and that reform could, in consequence, have no pacifying effect. Grattan admitted the premise, but denied the conclusion. 'In that report, and from the speeches of gentlemen, we learn that a conspiracy has existed for some years; that it was composed, originally, of persons of no powerful or ex-

tensive influence, and yet, these men, under prosecution and discountenance, have been so extended, as to reach every county in the kingdom; to levy a great army; to provide arms and ammunition, and to alarm, as the report states, the existence of the Government with the number of its proselytes procured by these two popular subjects—parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. They have recruited by these topics, and have spread their influence, notwithstanding your system of coercion, everywhere. . . . You have loaded Parliament and Government with the odium of an oppressive system, and with the further odium of rejecting these two popular topics, which are the most likely to gain the heart of the nation.' By reversing this policy, Parliament may not reconcile all, but it will reconcile the bulk of the nation, and if the leaders of the conspiracy remain unsatisfied, they will, at least, have lost their proselytes.

It was said that no Reform Bill which was not purely democratic, and founded on the new French model, would now satisfy the people. The answer was, that Ponsonby's plan had been sent to different persons who were much in the confidence of the people, and who had a leading influence among the different sects; and after a full discussion had been approved by them.

'I have in my hand,' said Grattan, 'a paper signed by 900 persons, considerable men of business and northern merchants, containing the following resolutions in substance. "That they conceive the cause of the present discontent to be the miserable state of the representation; that the discontent and suffering will continue until Parliament shall be reformed; and that they will persist in the pursuit of that object, and will not lose sight of it by cavils at the plan, but will expect and be satisfied with such a plan as does substantially restore to the community the right of electing the House of Commons, securing its independence against the in-

fluence of the Crown; limiting the duration of Parliament, and extending to his Majesty's subjects the privileges of the Constitution without distinction of religion."'[1]

The concluding passages of Grattan's speech were in a tone of solemn warning, and they appear to me to breathe an accent of the deepest patriotism and sincerity. Recalling the precedent of the American war, he said that there were now also, but two possible policies, a policy of reform and a policy of force. By adopting the latter, Parliament was losing the people while it sought to strengthen the Throne. 'Suppose you succeed, what is your success? A military government! a perfect despotism! . . . a Union! But what may be the ultimate consequence of such a victory? A separation! Let us suppose that the war continues, and that your conquest over your own people is interrupted by a French invasion, what would be your situation then? I do not wish to think of it, but I wish you to think of it. . . . When you consider the state of your arms abroad, and the ill-assured state of your government at home, surely you should pause a little. Even in the event of a peace, you are ill secured against a future war, which the state of Ireland under such a system would be too apt to invite; but in the event of the continuation of the war, your system is perilous indeed. I speak without asperity or resentment. I speak perhaps my delusion, but it is my heartfelt conviction; I speak my apprehension for the immediate state of our liberty, and for the ultimate state of the Empire. I see, or imagine I see, in this system everything which is dangerous to both. I hope I am mistaken; at least, I hope I exaggerate, possibly

[1] See on these discussions Grattan's *Life*, iv. 285–287; *Narrative of the Confinement and Exile of W. S. Dickson, D.D.*, pp. 36, 37.

I may. . . . I cannot, however, banish from my memory the lesson of the American war. . . . If that lesson has no effect on ministers, surely I can suggest nothing that will. We have offered you our measure. You will reject it. We deprecate yours; you will persevere. Having no hopes left to persuade or dissuade, and having discharged our duty, we shall trouble you no more, and after this day shall not attend the House of Commons.'

The House was deaf to this appeal; the adjournment was carried by 117 to 30,[1] and Grattan fulfilled his promise. Accompanied by Ponsonby, Curran, and a few others, and following the example of Fox and his immediate followers in England, he seceded from parliamentary life, and did not again appear upon the scene till the stirring debates upon the Union. This secession, among other effects, had that of taking away almost all public interest from the proceedings of the Irish House of Commons. From 1781 to the close of the session of 1797 there are excellent reports of its debates, which were evidently revised by the speakers, and which are of the greatest possible value to every serious student of this period of Irish history. They are a source from which I have drawn largely in this work, and there are even now few books on Irish politics which are either so interesting or so instructive. From this period to the period of the Union debates, our knowledge of what passed in the House of Commons is of the vaguest or most fragmentary character, derived chiefly from short newspaper reports, and we almost wholly lose the invaluable check which parliamentary criticism imposes on the extravagances of partisan statements.

Of the conduct of Grattan himself at this time, there is little more to be said. I have stated that since the

[1] *Irish Parl. Debates*, xvii. 551–570; Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 332–343.

recall of Fitzwilliam his speeches had assumed a more violent and more distinctly party character, and that all his hopes were placed in a change of ministry. Peace he believed to be vitally necessary, and he shared the belief which was then very prevalent, though the publication of confidential documents has now shown it to be unfounded, that Pitt did not sincerely desire it. Like Fox, with whom he was in close correspondence, he feared the imminent ruin both of the Empire and of Ireland.[1] No one could doubt that if the war continued, a French invasion of Ireland was in the highest degree probable, and Grattan well knew that it was scarcely possible to exaggerate or to measure the calamities it might produce. But even apart from this, there was the danger of national bankruptcy, the growing probability of a great rebellion, the certainty of a complete and rapid demoralisation of public opinion. The new revolutionary spirit was sweeping over the country like an epidemic, destroying the social and moral conditions on which all sound self-government must rest. In the judgment of Grattan, there was but one policy by which it could be effectually stayed. It was, in his own words, 'to combat the wild spirit of democratic liberty by the regulated spirit of organised liberty'—to carry as speedily as possible through the Irish Parliament measures of parliamentary reform, Catholic emancipation, and a commutation of tithes. It was now evident that

[1] In a curious letter to Grattan (April 7, 1797), Fox speaks of his little hope of either of them 'being able to effect any good, or prevent the absolute ruin of the two countries.' He adds: 'The truth is, that without a change of ministry no good can be done, either with you or with us—without it we cannot have peace; you cannot have reform nor real independence. . . . I really think that the existence of the funded property of England, and the connection between our two countries, depend upon the measures to be taken in a few, in a very few, months.' (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 315, 316.)

the existing Government was inexorably opposed to these measures, and it was dimly seen that if they were ever to be conceded, it was likely to be in connection with or subsequent to a legislative Union. Such an Union, Grattan had foreseen as early as 1785, and he regarded it with implacable hostility. But his own ideal was visibly fading, and it was becoming evident that the policy of 1782 was not destined to succeed. In spite of the Place Bill, the Pension Bill, and the Catholic Bill of 1793, the Parliament was sinking in character, influence, and popularity, and the independent minority had greatly diminished. This may be attributed, partly to the more determined attitude of hostility to reform which the Government had assumed, but in part also to a genuine feeling of panic and reaction which the French Revolution had produced in all privileged classes, and which had reduced to insignificant proportions the reform party in the English Legislature.

Outside the House, also, the position of Grattan was no longer what it had been. He was still followed by a large body of the country gentry, and of the more intelligent farmers and tradesmen of the North, but he was no longer sustained by a strong force of national enthusiasm. Another policy, other leaders and other principles, were in the ascendant, and they were hurrying the nation onward to other destinies. In all the utterances of Grattan at this time, private as well as public, a profound discouragement and a deep sense of coming calamities may be traced. In after years he spoke eloquently of the material prosperity that had grown up under the Irish Parliament, and of the many wise, liberal, and healing laws that it had passed, but his language at the time we are considering was in a different strain. He spoke of an experiment which had lasted for fourteen years, and which had failed. He

declared that a general election in Ireland meant no more than 'an opportunity to exercise by permission of the army the solitary privilege to return a few representatives of the people to a House occupied by the representatives of boroughs,' and his own secession from that House was the most eloquent confession of defeat.[1]

One of the most alarming signs of the dangerous condition of Ireland was the disaffection which now constantly appeared in the militia, and was not unfrequently discovered or suspected among the yeomanry and the regular troops. The seduction of soldiers was a main object of the United Irishmen, and Lake and Knox urged in many letters that it had proceeded so far that little or no reliance could be placed upon the militia, and that the introduction of a large additional force from England was imperatively needed. 'It answers no end,' wrote an active magistrate, 'to station small parties of the military in different cantonments, for they are regularly corrupted.'[2] This evil was by no means confined to the North. Infinite pains were taken in Dublin to secure the presence of at least one United Irishman in every company, and sedition spread so fast that one regiment was actually removed, and the Lord Lieutenant doubted whether it would not be necessary to move a second from the capital, for the express purpose of checking the contamination. There were, in May, courts-martial sitting at the same time on disaffected soldiers, in Cork, Limerick, and Belfast. Several militiamen were condemned and shot; no less than seventy men in the Monaghan Militia confessed that they had been seduced into taking the oath of the United Irishmen,[3] and, as might have been expected,

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, iv. 302.

[2] Alexander Ker, May 8, 1797. This gentleman adds: 'I am assured that the party of Fencibles stationed at Ballibay received pay as regularly from the United Irishmen as from his Majesty.'

[3] Camden to Portland (secret

the air was charged with vague rumours and suspicions, magnifying and multiplying the real dangers. Lake believed that many United Irishmen had enlisted in the yeomanry for the purpose of obtaining arms.[1] Even the Orangemen were at one time suspected, and apparently not quite without reason, of having been tampered with.[2] At another time, Camden wrote that he had heard, and was inclined to believe, that Archbishop Troy with six other priests had been sworn in.[3] As the Archbishop, during a long, upright, and consistent life, always showed himself one of the steadiest supporters of the law, and one of the strongest opponents of secret societies, this report may, I think, be most confidently discredited; but there is little doubt that many priests were in the conspiracy. Higgins expressed his belief, that there were not twenty loyal priests in Dublin.[4] 'The Catholic clergy,' McNally wrote in April, 'are to a man with the people,' and both he and Higgins warned

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and confidential), April 28, May 6, 1797; see, too, J. W., Oct. 5, 1796.

[1] This is corroborated by a letter of Henry Alexander, Feb. 5, 1797.

[2] 'Even the Orangemen, on whose loyalty and firmness I had the most perfect reliance, are shaken.' (Knox to Pelham, April 1, 1797.) 'The Protestants of the county Armagh, who call themselves Orangemen, and who had for some time been deluded by the United Irishmen, have renounced the societies, and are returning to their loyalty.' (Camden to Portland (secret), May 30, 1797.) Among the papers of the United Irishmen seized at Belfast in April, was one urging them 'to make friends of the Catholics and Orangemen, as that was doing good in Armagh.' (I.S.P.O.)

[3] Camden to Portland (private and confidential), May 6, 1797. Archbishop Troy was a Dominican, and the regular priests were believed to be much more dangerous than the secular priests. (See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 88, 89.) McNally was questioned about Troy, but could give no information. 'It is very probable,' he wrote, 'he [Troy] may be up, but by whom is, I think, a matter not to be discovered, as a priest most probably was the operator, and you may be assured he attends no organised society.' (J. W., May 22, 1797.)

[4] F. H., May 25, 1797.

the Government that the lower clergy were among the most active organisers of sedition, and also that the United Irishmen were taking special pains to enroll domestic servants, and to distribute them as spies through the chief houses in Ireland.[1] Even in the Castle, and in the immediate circle of the Chief Secretary, it was boasted among the United Irishmen that they had sources of information.[2]

Among the numerous arrests that were made in the North, there were several which had great importance. In February, Arthur O'Connor was imprisoned for a seditious libel, as well as two brothers of the name of Simms, who were proprietors of the 'Northern Star.' The paper was, for some months, continued, under the editorship of Neilson; but after its offices had been wrecked, and its types destroyed by the Monaghan Militia, it was not revived. In April, on the information of a miniature painter named Newell, who had been at one time a Defender, and at another an United Irishman, the Government succeeded in arresting, in a single swoop, at Belfast, two whole committees, consisting of about forty persons, and in seizing a number of important papers, disclosing the organisation, objects, and extent of the society. A portion of these papers was soon after published by Parliament. They furnished decisive evidence that separation and a republic were

[1] J. W., April 28, May 22, 29, Sept. 11, 1797. 'The spirit of disaffection is so great, that no gentleman can trust his Roman Catholic servants. A plot has been discovered (in which several of Mr. Conolly's servants were concerned), to let the Defenders into the house of Castletown in the middle of the night, and some of these servants had been bred in his family from children. . . . It appears that one of the chief objects of the United Irishmen is to corrupt the servants universally, so as to obtain an avenue to every gentleman whose opposition they may dread.' (Camden to Portland (secret), May 30, 1797.)

[2] F. Higgins, May 30, 1797.

the real ends of the conspiracy, and that a negotiation and correspondence with France had long been going on, and they also furnished some more or less trustworthy evidence of the extent of its ramifications. It appeared, from the reports of the baronial committees, that rather more than 72,000 men had been enrolled in Ulster, and that the whole province was organised for revolt, by a multitude of small societies, each of which was limited to thirty-five members. The papers that were seized belonged to the eightieth of these societies in Belfast. Outside Ulster, only Dublin, West Meath, and Kildare appear to have been, at this time, fully organised, though emissaries were busily extending the conspiracy through other parts of Ireland.[1]

Newell told more than was published by Parliament, and he is said to have been taken masked to various places in Belfast, to point out those whom he knew to be connected with the conspiracy. His most startling statement was, that he had himself been one of a secret committee of twelve members, which was formed for the express purpose of assassinating members of the society who were suspected of having betrayed it to the Government. There was a trial, he said, but not in the presence of the accused person, and if that person was found guilty, one or more members of the committee were chosen by lot to murder him. Newell mentioned that he had known of the assassination of several persons, and had himself been present when a soldier was first made drunk, and then flung over a bridge near Belfast, with weights in his pockets.[2]

[1] *Report of Secret Committee* (Aug. 1798), Appendix, pp. xii, xxi, xxii.

[2] Several papers relating to Newell will be found in the Irish State Paper Office. He afterwards quarrelled with the Government, and appears then to have pretended that his information had been false. A kind of autobiography, in which he accused himself of all kinds of enormi-

It is certain that assassinations, and threats of assassination, constantly accompanied the United Irish movement, but it was pretended that these were mere isolated instances of private vengeance, provoked by the severities of the troops and of the Government, and the leading members of the society in Dublin have left on record a solemn protest against the charge of having given any countenance or favour to them. They declared that they entirely disbelieved in the existence of a committee of assassination; that they had heard persons mentioned as being members of it, whom they knew, from 'the most private and confidential conversations, to be utterly abhorrent from that crime;' 'that in no communications from those who were placed at the head of the United Irishmen to the rest of that body, and in *no official* paper, was assassination ever inculcated, but frequently and fervently reprobated;' 'that it was considered by them with horror, on account of its criminality, and with personal dread, because it would render ferocious the minds of men in whose hands their lives were placed.'[1] In the case of Emmet, this statement is corroborated by a document which was found among his papers, strongly censuring any resort to assassination, and it is, I believe, perfectly true, that the leaders of the conspiracy never, as a body, either publicly or secretly, gave any sanction to that crime. They comprised men with very various

ties, and Cooke of having incited him to perjury, was published in his name. It is reprinted by Dr. Madden, who contends that it is genuine. (*United Irishmen*, i. 531–580.) Newell is said to have been ultimately murdered. See, too, on Newell's information and retractation, Lord Clare's speech in the *Debate in the Irish House of Lords, Feb.* 19, 1798, pp. 100, 101.

[1] See the memorial of Emmet, O'Connor, and McNevin to the Government in 1798 (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 358, 359); and also the evidence of Emmet. (McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 219.)

objects and characters. Some of them aimed only at the avowed and original objects of the society—a reform of Parliament, and an union of friendship and politics between the divided sects, and had become rebels only because they believed that English influence was being steadily employed to prevent both reform and emancipation. But others were passionate disciples of the French Revolution, at a time when tyrannicide was a favourite doctrine in France; they argued that the Insurrection Act, the imprisonments without trial, and the burning of houses, had emancipated them from all restraint, and, if they may be judged by their language, they would gladly, in the event of a successful insurrection, have reproduced in Ireland the French Reign of Terror. Of these men, John Sheares, who was on the Directory of the United Irishmen from March to May 1798, was a typical example. When O'Connell was a young man, he crossed over with him from France, and learnt that he had been present at the execution of Lewis XVI., attracted, as he said, by 'the love of the cause,' and the same spirit continued to animate him in Ireland. He wrote for the 'Press' a letter to Lord Clare, which was a distinct incitement to assassination, and the draft of an unfinished proclamation was found among his papers urging the rebels, when the insurrection began, to give no quarter to any Irishman who persisted in resisting them.[1]

It would perhaps be a mistake to interpret such language too seriously. Irish rebellion has usually been a very rhetorical thing, in which language far outstrips meaning, and it has had neither the genuine

[1] See Madden's *United Irishman*, iv. 208, 222, 227, 305, 306. The letter to Lord Clare was in print, but not published, when the *Press* was seized. Madden quotes an equally outrageous proclamation of Napper Tandy (iv. 304). Compare the sentiments of Tone which I have referred to, vol. iii. p. 509.

fanaticism nor the genuine ferocity of French revolution. Many young enthusiasts, who talked much about Brutus and Cassius, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, would probably have proved in the hour of action neither very heroic nor very ferocious; and Thomas Emmet stated that the plan of the Executive of the United Irishmen, in the event of a successful insurrection, was simply to seize the leading members of the Irish Government, and retain them as hostages till the struggle was over, and then to banish them from the country, confiscating their property, but reserving an allowance for their wives and children.[1] Whether such moderation would have been observed in the hour of triumph, may be much doubted, and it is certain that some of the informers who had best means of knowing, represented the conspirators as looking forward to a proscription and massacre of their most conspicuous enemies. The movement, too, if it comprised at one extremity educated enthusiasts, comprised at the other great numbers of men, of the ordinary Whiteboy type, who pursued their ends by the old Whiteboy methods. Among the innumerable small committees of half-educated men which were acting very independently in every quarter of Ulster, it is in a high degree probable that plans of murder were discussed and organised. Informers, or suspected informers, were frequently murdered, and threats of assassination were habitually employed to deter jurymen, witnesses, and magistrates from discharging their duty. In May, a conspiracy to murder Lord Carhampton was detected, and two of the conspirators were brought to justice.[2] In one of the trials of

[1] See the statement of Emmet in his examination before the Secret Committee of the House of Lords. (McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 219.)

[2] Pelham to Colonel Brownrigg, May 20; Camden to Portland, May 30. Pelham, writing to England, says: 'The proneness to murder is sufficiently

the United Irishmen, it appeared that at a baronial committee near Carrickfergus, the question of assassination had been formally discussed, that a resolution had been moved and supported, among others by William Orr, demanding that any man who either recommended or practised it should be expelled from the society, but that this resolution had been rejected. In one of the papers seized at Belfast, the following sentence occurs, which is not the less significant because its grammar shows the class of persons from whom it emanated. 'Your county committee thinks that if there is any United Irishman on the jury, that will commit any of the prisoners, that is confined for being United Irishman, ought to lose their existence.'[1]

In the summer of 1797, a secretly printed paper, called the 'Union Star,' appeared in Dublin, openly advocating assassination, and holding up to popular vengeance many particular persons. Its owner, editor, and printer, was a gunsmith named Walter Cox, and it was printed on only one side in order that it might be affixed to the walls. In December, the Government succeeded in suppressing it, the editor having, it appears, voluntarily given himself up, and promising, on condition of pardon, to disclose all that he knew.

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proved in the trials of the conspirators against Lord Carhampton. The assassination of all informers is part of the system of the United Irishmen, and too many have fallen victims to it. Dunn, who was convicted of having intended to murder Lord Carhampton, acknowledged that he planned . . . the murder of a father and son in one of Lord Carhampton's lodges, and that he actually murdered two other men' (Nov. 1, 1797). Dunn, in his confession, stated that the murder of Lord Carhampton was regularly discussed in a baronial committee. This trial was published. Some particulars relating to it will be found in a pamphlet called *Application of Barruel's Memoirs of Jacobinism to the Secret Societies of Ireland and Great Britain* (London, 1798), pp. 18–21.

[1] Madden, i. 537; *Secret Committee*, appendix, p. xxvii.

The terms were accepted, and Cooke had a curious conversation with him, which he reported at length to Pelham. Cox stated that he was the sole author and publisher of the paper, and that he had latterly continued the publication 'more from vanity than mischief.' 'He says,' continues Cooke, 'that he has been for some time against continuing the scheme for making a separation from England, because he thought it would not succeed; thinks it will if there be an invasion. Lord Edward Fitzgerald and O'Connor have been often with him. They knew of his writing the "Star." He says Lord Edward is weak and not fit to command a sergeant's guard, but very zealous. O'Connor, he says, has abilities and is an enthusiast, but he thinks they want system. Lord Edward told him . . . that letters had arrived from France giving assurance of invasion. Cox thinks the Press is doing much mischief, for he says it is not conceivable with what avidity the lower classes read it. He is a Catholic, says the priests are much concerned, and that the lower Catholics are universally indisposed to the Protestants on account of the oppression they have received, and the insolence they have been treated with for a century. He is angry with the leaders of the United Irishmen. He says they keep themselves behind their curtain, urge on the lower classes to their destruction, and only mean to take the lead and come forward if insurrection should be successful. He is a clever man, and deep.'[1]

The intimacy of Fitzgerald and O'Connor with Cox, is a very suspicious circumstance, though it must be

[1] Cooke to Pelham, Dec. 14, 1797. Cox was afterwards accused, but I believe without any just reason, of being concerned in the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. It appears, however, from a letter of Cooke to Wickham (March 10, 1798), that he gave the Government occasional information, and he ultimately received a small pension. Some particulars about his later life will be found in Madden, ii. 270–288.

added, that O'Connor stated that 'The Union Star' had been set up during his imprisonment, that on leaving prison he at once remonstrated with Cox upon the evil he was doing, and that it was by his advice that Cox surrendered himself.[1] Emmet, too, as might have been expected from his character, strongly reprobated 'The Union Star,' and did all in his power to suppress it.[2] At the same time, the Government had information which may have been untrue, and which may have been exaggerated, but which cannot be lightly cast aside, that projects of a very sanguinary description were discussed in the inmost circles of the conspiracy, and were supported by some of its principal members. In a confidential letter from Camden to Pelham towards the close of 1797, the following passage occurs: 'J. W. [McNally] informs us that the moderate party have carried their point, and that the intended proscription is given up. O'Connor, Lord E. F. and McNevin are the advocates for assassination, the rest are for moderate measures.'[3]

In the course of the summer, there was some improvement in Ulster. The arrest of so many of the leading conspirators had given a severe blow to the conspiracy; and on May 17, a new proclamation was issued by the Lord Lieutenant and Council, placing the whole country more strictly under martial law. Having asserted that a seditious conspiracy notoriously existed, and that a rebel army was being organised and disciplined for the purpose of subverting the authority of the King, the Parliament and the Constitution, the proclamation mentioned the assemblage of great bodies under pretext of planting or digging potatoes, or attending funerals; the armed parties, who in different

[1] Madden, ii. 277.

[2] This is mentioned in an undated letter of McNally.

[3] Camden to Pelham, Dec. 20, 1797.

parts of the kingdom were attacking houses and plundering arms; the innumerable trees that had been cut down for the purpose of making handles of pikes; the attempts that had been made to disarm the yeomanry; the frequent forcible resistance offered to the King's troops, and the failure of the civil power to grapple with an evil which was so formidable and so widespread. It had therefore become necessary to employ military force; and all officers commanding his Majesty's troops were accordingly empowered and ordered, 'by the exertion of their utmost force,' to suppress the conspiracy; 'to use their utmost endeavour' to discover concealed arms; to put down all traitorous, tumultuous, and unlawful assemblies, and to bring to punishment all persons disturbing, or attempting to disturb, the public peace. At the same time, while the proclamation foreshadowed a greatly increased severity of repression, it offered a free pardon to all persons who had joined the conspiracy, and had not been guilty of certain specified crimes, provided they went to a magistrate of the county before June 25, took the oath of allegiance, and, if required by the magistrate, gave recognisances for their future good behaviour.[1]

Almost immediately after this proclamation, several members of different inferior committees were captured. Some were sent as vagabonds to the fleet. At Newry a great number of pikes and other arms were discovered; some of the principal traders were apprehended, and many of the country people, terrified by the ancient Britons, gave up their arms and asked pardon under the proclamation.[2] Dean Warburton wrote that a very

[1] Seward, *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 196–199.

[2] Camden to Portland, May 30. There is a curious account of the arrest at Newry of a man named Lawson, in whose house fifty-six pike heads were found. As soon as the arrest was known, a panic spread through the town, and 'an immense number fled.'

favourable change had appeared, which he ascribed partly to the disappointment of hopes from the French, partly to the proclamation of military law, and perhaps still more to the revival of the Orangemen, 'who,' he said, 'are now beginning to appear in vast numbers.' 'I should earnestly advise,' he continued, 'the return of every gentleman to his home and to his estate, to cherish as well as to *regulate* the rising spirit of loyalty,' and he believed that by such a course the very name of United Irishmen might be extinguished. 'Unless the French appear,' he said, 'I am convinced we shall not only be safe, but triumphant,' and he mentions that in a single day 1,474 of his parishioners came to take the oath of allegiance, and about 400 stand of arms were surrendered.[1]

The military powers which were entrusted to the Commander-in-Chief were at this time very terrible, and it was felt by the Government that they ought to be placed in stronger and more skilful hands than those of Lord Carhampton and Lake. An offer of the command in Ireland was accordingly made, in the May of 1797, to Lord Cornwallis, and Lord Camden very warmly supported it. Camden, indeed, desired to resign into the hands of Cornwallis the Viceroyalty itself, believing that, in the very critical condition of Ireland, all power should, as much as possible, be concentrated in the hands of a competent soldier. If, however, Cornwallis refused to accept the Viceroyalty, Camden implored him to accept the military command, and promised to

Lawson was 'marched through the town with the pikes strung round his neck and arms.' It was at first reported that he was about to give information, but 'it was soon known that, in reply to an observation made to him that life was sweet, he said it was, but to him it was not sweet on the terms offered,' and when this saying became known, the fugitives returned. (George Anderson (Newry), June 11, 1797.)

[1] Dean Warburton, May 27, June 1, 1797.

relinquish into his hands all the military control and power which the Lord Lieutenant possessed.[1] It was extremely unfortunate for Ireland that this negotiation failed. Cornwallis differed radically from the political conduct pursued there, and he believed that it was not possible to dissociate the defence of the country from political measures. As Portland wrote to Camden, he refused to undertake the command in Ireland, 'unless means were taken to separate the Catholics from the Dissenters, and it was evident that the bias of his opinion strongly inclined him to suppose that very great concessions, little, if at all, short of what is termed Catholic emancipation, were necessary for that purpose, and ought not to be withheld.' Cornwallis declared that, in the event of actual or imminent invasion, he was prepared, if necessary, to cross the Channel, but that nothing, in his opinion, could put Ireland in a state of obedience and security, unless strong measures were taken 'to prevent the union between the Catholics and Dissenters, and that he should not act honestly in countenancing a contrary opinion, by undertaking a task which, he believed in his conscience, could never be accomplished.' Portland communicated this answer to Pitt and Dundas, and the proposed appointment was abandoned.[2]

A similar offer was made to Cornwallis on the eve of the outbreak of the rebellion, and was again declined.[3] It is not probable that if it had been accepted on either occasion, the rebellion could have been averted; but if a general of real and commanding ability had at this time presided over the defence of Ireland, the military excesses that took place might at least have been

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 325–327.

[2] Portland to Camden (most secret and confidential), June 10, 1797.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 334.

diminished. The almost unlimited discretion that was actually left to subordinate military authorities inevitably led to gross abuses, and it was in the summer of 1797 that the practice of burning houses, as a measure of punishment or police, came into use. Sometimes they were burnt because arms were not surrendered; sometimes because arms had been discovered; sometimes because a great crime had been committed in the district; sometimes because they were found empty at night in proclaimed districts, where the inhabitants were forbidden to leave them after sunset, and because their owners were believed to be absent on marauding expeditions. At the same time, in many quarters, the Orange movement burst out afresh in its old form of outrage and persecution, while the United Irishmen made a skilful use of the partial alliance of the Government with the more respectable Orangemen, to lash the Catholics into madness and rebellion. The state of Ulster can only be truly realised by collecting much fragmentary information; but if the reader has the patience to follow with me the casual lights furnished by officers and magistrates, it will, I think, gradually dawn upon him, and he will certainly have no difficulty in understanding the dangers and the animosities that were arising.

'I have received information,' wrote Lord Blayney from Castleblaney, in the county of Monaghan, 'of several depredations committed by Orange boys; one man murdered, and two badly wounded. They say they are sanctioned by Government, and I am sorry to say, that formerly sufficient notice was not taken of them. Why sanction a mob of any kind? . . . The report is general through the country, that Government protects them. You should not lose a moment in contradicting the assertion. The United business is fast on the decline, so *don't revive it*, and the scene of civil

war and bloodshed which may hereafter ensue by creating distinctions and parties of that nature in the country, may be very dangerous.'[1] 'I am informed,' wrote a brother of the Bishop of Ossory, 'and it is generally understood by everyone, that the depredations committed all round here (which are shocking to humanity), by what they call Orange boys, are done by the sanction of Government. Were I to enumerate the robberies, murders, and shameful outrages committed on the Catholics of this place, by those Orange boys, headed by officers in full yeomanry uniform, it would be an endless business, and if Government has countenanced them, I humbly conceive, and pardon me for the remark, that they ought to act within bounds.'[2] The flight of Catholics from Ulster, which had for a time ceased, began again. Bodies of 100 or 150 men often crossed in a single day from the North of Ireland to Portpatrick, and dispersed in every direction through the country; and the Duke of Portland suggested to the Lord Advocate of Scotland, that those who could not give a good account of themselves should be treated as vagrants and sent back.[3] Lord Altamount and his brother, with whose excellent letters we are already familiar, wrote that a new stream of Catholics was pouring into Mayo; and although the country about them, they said, was still in a state of 'the most perfect tranquillity,' and although they had no reason to attribute any bad intentions to the immigrants, they feared that these might become highly dangerous, when their means were exhausted, unless

[1] Lord Blayney (Castleblayney), June 2, 1797.

[2] Captain O'Beirne, June 3, 1797. The name of the place is illegible.

[3] Charles Greville (Secretary of the Duke of Portland) to Pelham, June 15. Greville does not say that these were Catholics, but the evidence of the flight of the Catholics makes it probable.

some method for giving them employment could be discovered.[1]

Lord Blayney's warnings about the excesses of the Orangemen, and about the reports that the Government were favouring them, were answered by Pelham with the somewhat idle generality, that 'Government did not wish to favour one party more than another, but to do equal justice to all.' Lord Blayney replied, that the management of this matter required the utmost caution. 'Orangemen ought certainly to be shown some countenance, but under that cloke robbers and assassins will shelter themselves, and the most conspicuous who countenance them will be held forward as their leaders.'[2] In the same letter he gives an account of his own conduct in burning houses.

Probably the earliest instance of this practice, and the instance which was accompanied by the most atrocious circumstances, was that of the Ancient Britons near Newry which has been already related. It appears to have taken place in the last days of May. Five days after the letter describing it, Lord Blayney gave the

[1] Denis Browne, June 17; Lord Altamount (Westport), August 9, 1797. Occasionally disaffected persons were found in this country, and Lord Altamount gives a curious account of a man named McMullet: 'One of the most incorrigible villains I have ever heard of, with extensive abilities such as might most usefully be employed, with a better disposition.' He was imprisoned, and it was soon discovered that 'he had sworn every prisoner in the gaol with him, and seduced them all to his own doctrines.' He was, therefore, removed to solitary confinement, and it was found that he 'employed his leisure in designing new improvements for a guillotine.' Another Mayo magistrate, writing from Newport, mentions that emissaries from the North had been discovered trying to swear men in, as United Irishmen. He added that, after the strictest inquiry, this seemed to be the first attempt of the kind in that country, and that 'this part of the country is in the most peaceable condition, and likely to continue so.' (Mr. O'Donnel, May 21, 1797.)

[2] Lord Blayney, June 10, 1797.

Government an account of his own measures to pacify the county Armagh, and the portion of Monaghan about Castleblaney. He had obtained by surrender or capture a vast quantity of pikes; had disarmed many men by force; had administered the oath of allegiance to multitudes, and had on one occasion himself mounted the pulpit in a church, and exhorted the congregation against French principles. In one district, however, which he knew from ample and trustworthy information to be the main source of the disturbances in Louth, Armagh, and the adjacent parts of Monaghan, he admits that he had used very harsh measures. 'I had four people to give information, but no one dare venture to go into the country, for fear of being murdered. I could not go very wrong, so burned several houses, the inhabitants of which were not at home, and I had information of three drills that night which I could not come at.' In one case he burned the house and destroyed the property to the amount of 800*l.* of a noted ringleader whom he was unable to capture. In the other cases he had only set fire to the roofs, and the damage done did not exceed 40*l.* He had taken these extreme measures, he said, in order to stop the intimidation of witnesses, and to show the people what they must expect if they did not surrender their arms. 'Should it prove that any of these persons were innocent, you will have no objection to my making good that loss, it being only for example.'[1]

The outrages had begun to spread into the midland counties,[2] and West Meath was at this time at least as

[1] Lord Blayney, June 10, 1797. There is, in the I.S.P.O., a letter from another magistrate (Norman Steel, Carrickmacross, June 8), protesting strongly against this burning of houses by Lord Blayney.

[2] 'In great parts of the North, the disaffected are so completely organised and arranged under leaders, that the conspiracy is extremely formidable, and might be destructive if assisted by an invading enemy. The Defenders

disturbed as any county in Ulster. Scarcely a night passed without Defender outrages. The plunder of arms was systematically carried on, and the administration of justice was almost paralysed by outrage and intimidation. A gentleman from that county writes a horrible account of the murder of a man named McManus, who had been a witness in a recent trial. He escaped from the place where he was first attacked, and fled for half a mile before his pursuers, who repeatedly fired at him. Being at last wounded, he darted into a cabin and defended himself desperately. The murderers took off the thatch, and the wounded man again tried to run. He caught up a girl, thinking that this would prevent his pursuers from firing, but they shot her through the arm, killed McManus, and then beat his skull into a hundred pieces. 'Surely,' continues the writer, 'there cannot be measures too harsh adopted in respect to this accursed people. I am determined to risk a violent one to-morrow, and burn the whole quarter where the men suspected of this live. It is impossible an innocent person can suffer, for such a person is not to be found. They are all implicated in active or passive guilt.' [1]

also in the midland counties of Longford, West Meath, Leitrim, Cavan, Meath, and Kildare are spreading their outrages, and seizing the arms of the gentry.' (Camden to Portland, May 30, 1797.)

[1] Mr. Rochford (co. West Meath), June 1797. McNally, who frequently pointed out abuses to the Government, wrote at this time: 'The conduct of Mr. Nugent in the co. West Meath makes much noise. He hung up a man to make him confess, and has burned eight or ten houses. This terrifies but does not reclaim, and probably will produce retaliation.' (J. W., June 21, 1797.) Mr. Low, the chief constable at Gayville, in this county, wrote that a man named Dunor unguardedly said he knew the Defenders who robbed Charles Rochfort. His body, with his skull broken, was soon after found in a bog hole. 'The Wicklow Militia and Carribineers burned seven houses of the Defenders in this district yesterday. This kind of business, I think, will soon stop the Defenders.' (Mr. Low, June 25, 1797.)

From Multifarnham, near Mullingar, an officer reported the proceedings of his soldiers day by day. On Monday two soldiers overheard five persons plotting against the military. Two houses in the town which belonged to them were in consequence immediately burnt. On Wednesday night an avowed leader of the Defenders was taken, and his house burnt. He attempted to escape, and was instantly shot. 'In executing this truly unpleasant business,' the officer adds, 'every humanity consistent with my orders was strictly observed. The beds, furniture, and goods of each house burnt, were previously removed and safely delivered to their unfortunate families. A Mr. Dodd (a person of suspected character and a supposed Committee man) had been pointed out to me at an early stage of the depredations that have disgraced this country. On going to his house in consequence, he was found absent, and as . . . it was thought necessary to make an instant example, his offices were consumed.' On Thursday a notice was posted up that unless the arms that had been plundered were restored, the town would be burnt. Twenty-eight stand of arms were brought in.[1]

An officer sent down by Lord Carhampton to pacify the country round Charleville in the same county, wrote to his commander that for six weeks before his arrival no respectable person there had dared to leave his house after dusk; that loyal subjects were in constant fear of their lives; and that the hopes of the disaffected had been immensely raised by the mutiny in the British fleet. He had gone to the chapel, and after mass addressed a congregation of 800 persons, as he believed with some good results. A robber named Plunket, when on the point of being shot, turned informer. 'The consequent shooting of six of the inhabitants of

[1] George Bell, June 19, 1797.

this neighbourhood the following day, and the burning of a part of Moyvore, upon the information of Plunket, completed the business. . . . Of the thirty-five houses burned, I believe at least thirty of them deserved their fate, and the remainder being the poorest cabins in the place, compensation can easily be made to their owners. . . . I will conclude with giving joy of the restored peace and tranquillity of this part of your district.'[1]

Other letters were in a somewhat different strain. Lord Mountjoy, who was a great proprietor in Tyrone, wrote that his tenants were very prosperous, but exceedingly disaffected owing to a chain of sub-committees extending over the estate. The system of the United Irishmen was to get all the arms on the estate into their hands, returning those of their friends, keeping those of the loyalists. Lord Mountjoy had threatened to bring in the military if the arms that had been taken were not restored. Disaffection, he believed, in his part of the country was at best only smothered, and he had little doubt that if a foreign force landed and gained any success, the people would rise to support it. At present, however, the country was getting quieter. It was reported from Mountjoy that 'the Roman Catholics are all taking measures to leave it; I suppose through apprehensions of the Orange boys.' 'As yet,' he says, 'I have heard no well-founded complaint of the conduct of the military. The Cambridge Fencibles are commanded by officers who are extremely attentive to prevent any outrage. . . . However, the fact is, that the republican spirit of the Presbyterians does not brook well military law, which, however, has been the real cause of the restoration of peace.'[2]

In the neighbourhood of Dungannon the animosities

[1] Charles Sheridan to Lord Carhampton, June 22, 1797.

[2] Lord Mountjoy to Pelham, June 11, 21, 1797.

between Protestants and Catholics appear to have run especially high, and there is reason to think that the magistrates there, were far from approving of the proceedings of the military.[1] A letter from one of them gives us a terrible glimpse of the abuses that occurred. 'I will grant you the excursions of the yeomanry at the beginning, when *headed by their officers*, had a happy effect in forcing in the arms and, to appearance at least, turning the country to its duty and allegiance. But for a set of armed men, without any gentlemen at their head, to be permitted at their pleasure day after day, and what is worse, night after night, to scour whole tracts of country, destroy houses, furniture, &c., and stab and cut in a most cruel manner numbers that, from either private resentment or any other cause, they may take a dislike to, will, if permitted to go on, depopulate and destroy the trade of this country. We are beginning anew the county Armagh business, papering and noticing the Romans to fly on or before such a day or night, or if found afterwards in their houses, certain death.'[2]

From Omagh in Tyrone another magistrate wrote that the country around him, and also as he hears the

[1] 'The return of the people to their allegiance is everywhere fallacious, unless where it is attended by a surrender of arms. Magistrates, as usual, are doing much mischief by administering the oaths of allegiance to the people of districts known to be full of arms, without insisting upon their being given up, and granting certificates which the people consider as a protection to their concealed arms. Generally speaking, I do assert that the people will perjure themselves over and over again, rather than part with a gun. By terror only they can be disarmed.' General Knox (Dungannon) to Pelham, June 16, 1797.

[2] Robert Lowry (Dungannon), June 29, 1797. This account is confirmed by a later letter from Captain Lindsey (near Dungannon), Sept. 14, who says that excesses had been committed on the houses of several Roman Catholics of that neighbourhood; that they were in great distress, and asking for military protection.

country around Dungannon, was perfectly quiet. More than three weeks had passed without a single attack by United Irishmen on houses. 1,514 persons had come before him to take the oath of allegiance, and to qualify under the proclamation; yet still he had received trustworthy intelligence of the burning of houses. Such unnecessary severity at a time when the country was quiet, he said, could not fail to alienate the King's subjects, and 'if persisted in will, in all probability, insure a rebellion.'[1]

Many incidental signs show clearly how swiftly and how fiercely religious animosities were rising. On one occasion some Orange yeomen were accused of taking part in the destruction of a Catholic chapel. It appeared that they had been purely passive spectators, but the officer, while insisting on this point, very candidly adds: 'I entertain no doubt that almost all the corps of yeomen in this county would look on and possibly encourage such an act, from the great animosity that exists between the Protestants of the Established Church and the Catholics.'[2] Sir George Hill wrote from Derry, that application had been made to him from many quarters to know whether he would 'countenance, or at least wink at, the introduction of the Orange business' into that neighbourhood. He answered, that he would oppose the Orange system as strenuously as that of the United Irishmen. 'The restless disposition and dis-

[1] Mr. Eccles (Ecclesville, near Omagh), June 30, 1797. There appears to have been a great difference in different localities in the number of people who came in to take the oath of allegiance. From Granard a magistrate wrote, that not more than three persons in that part of the country had yet done so, and he added: 'Never was there a wiser measure adopted in a moment of great peril, than the order of the 20th May, leaving the military to their own discretion, instead of criminal prosecutions, generally the mockery of common sense and justice.' (Alexander Montgomery, June 17, 1797.)

[2] Mr. Verner to Pelham, July 1797.

contented nature of the Presbyterians are such as to impel them to embrace turbulence on any terms. If one could engage them in a good and necessary cause, they are excellent, persevering friends; but as we have nothing in this country to dread from the Catholics, and knowing so well the determined spirit of republicanism which exists, I apprehend by encouraging Orangemen at this period we should only continue treasonable associations under a changed name. The spirit of this country might, at any moment it became necessary, be roused against the Catholics.'[1] Anonymous letters were circulated, accusing the Orangemen of concealing arms in the houses of Catholics, in order to have a pretext for burning them.[2] The report that the Orangemen had sworn an oath to extirpate Catholics was industriously spread, and although it had been explicitly and solemnly denied by the heads of all the Orange lodges, it was persistently repeated and readily believed. There were rumours that the Orangemen were about to massacre the Catholics, and other rumours that not a Protestant would be left alive in Ireland in the following March, and there were vague, disquieting reports, of great movements of religious fanaticism agitating the Catholic masses.[3] On both sides the habit of wearing distinctive colours had already begun, and it added greatly to the prevailing anarchy. General Knox, whose masculine mind often leant towards stern measures, but never towards trivial ones, mentions that Lord Carhampton himself had taken a green handkerchief 'from the neck of one of the enragés,' and asked what possible good such proceedings could effect.[4] On one occasion a female patriot accosted one of the Ancient

[1] Sir G. Hill to Cooke, Sept. 23, 1797.
[2] July 14, 1797.
[3] Cooke to Pelham, Dec. 23. J. Brownrigg (Edenderry), Aug. 27.
[4] Knox to Pelham, April 19.

Britons who was on guard at Newry, and was very roughly handled. She boasted that, though they might prevent her from wearing a green handkerchief, they could not prevent her from wearing green garters, and the soldiers then tied her petticoats round her neck, and thus sent her home.[1]

Such things naturally produced fierce riots. On one occasion, on a fair day, at Stewartstown, in the county of Tyrone, some yeomen began to tear off promiscuously every green ribbon and handkerchief, from men and women. In a moment, the whole market-place was in a blaze. Swords, bayonets, spades, and every other weapon that could be found, were employed, and a number of men were soon seriously wounded.[2] On the following 12th of July, when the people of the same town were celebrating the usual Protestant anniversary, a large body of the Catholic Kerry Militia attacked them with bayonets in the market-place. The dragoons and yeomen were called out. Seven of the militia were killed, six wounded, and the remainder captured, while five of the dragoons and yeomen, as well as two countrymen, were killed, and many others badly wounded.[3] On the following day, a party of dragoons, under Lord Blayney, who were sent to pacify the country, encountered a party of the North Kerry Militia, and either through resentment, or, as the court-martial decided, through confusion and panic, at once attacked them, and killed three.[4] At Cookstown, the Newry Militia attacked the yeomen, who wore orange ribbons in honour of the Battle of the Boyne, and a scuffle ensued, in which two lives were lost.[5]

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[1] See a letter of Pelham to some member of the Government in England, Nov. 1.

[2] Andrew Newton, May 3.

[3] W. Hamilton, July 14; Lord Castlestewart, July 15, 1797.

[4] Camden to Portland, Nov. 3, 1797.

[5] Pelham to one of the officials in England, Nov. 2, 1797.

The religious animosity still further increased the prevailing distrust of the militia, who were mainly Catholics. 'Be assured,' wrote Lord Blayney, 'the yeomanry of the North are your sheet anchor. Was it not for the confidence the United Irishmen have in the militia, matters would not have gone the lengths they have. Therefore, beware of the militia. I have strong reasons for saying so. . . . Among the observations I have made, the Roman Catholics alone have universally been guilty of robbery and murder.'[1]

At the same time, during the summer and autumn of 1797, real steps had been made towards the pacification of the North. The process of disarming was steadily carried on, and it met with some considerable success. It appears, from a confidential Government report, that in the first twenty days of July, there were surrendered in the northern district and in Westmeath 8,300 guns, and about 1,100 pikes, besides a large number of swords, pistols, and bayonets, while about 2,500 other guns, and about 550 pikes, were seized by force.[2] Several quarters which, in the spring, had been great centres of disaffection, had become at least passively loyal. From Belfast, Lake wrote: 'The town is more humbled than it has ever been, and many of the villains have quitted it.'[3] Newry, which was only second to Belfast as a centre of disturbance, seems to have been effectually pacified. Dundalk and its surrounding country were pronounced perfectly quiet.[4] The courage and moderation with which Dean Warburton laboured to pacify his district of the county of Armagh received its reward, when he was able to announce to his parishioners in July, that the pro-

[1] Lord Blayney, July 21, 1797.

[2] I.S.P.O. More than 4,000 of the guns were said to be unserviceable.

[3] Lake to Pelham, June 4, 1797.

[4] August 1797.

clamation was revoked which placed that county under the Insurrection Act.[1] Dungannon also, but not its neighbourhood, had been pacified by General Knox. 'We are under no apprehensions,' wrote a clergyman from that town, 'but to the north of us it is quite lost. Dungannon is frontiered by Stewartstown, an advanced post in the enemies' country, with many royalists in it. Thence, to the northern sea, scarce a friend. . . . Be assured Orange is now loyal.'[2] 'In consequence of threats and some rigour,' wrote General Nugent, from Hillsborough, 'the country people are bringing in their arms very fast, and taking the oath of allegiance. . . . Accounts from all parts of the country are very favourable, and agree that the lower orders of people are dropping off rapidly from the cause of the United Irishmen, and we have every reason to think that, with the assistance and continuance of the system which has been lately adopted against them, we shall have nothing to apprehend from their machinations.'[3]

The happiest sign, however, of returning peace, was

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[1] Dean Warburton, July 21, 1797.

[2] Rev. W. Richardson, Nov. 2, 1797.

[3] Inclosed by Lake to Pelham, June 24, 1797. In another letter Pelham wrote: 'I believe I am not too sanguine when I say, that if there is no invasion, we shall suppress the spirit of insurrection in this country. The troops have universally shown the greatest loyalty and spirit, and there have been fewer excesses than could have been imagined. Sir Watkin Wynne and the Ancient Britons have completely terrified the rebels near Newry, and are the objects of universal admiration amongst the loyal. The firmness and temper of General Lake have been equally successful at Belfast, and that town is now under complete subjection. At a special commission held there by Lord Yelverton and another judge, above 3,000 people came in and took the oath of allegiance in open court. . . . In other parts of the North, there is a great change for the better, and the loyal inhabitants are no longer afraid of avowing their sentiments. . . . Insurrection is becoming every day less likely and less practicable.' (Pelham to the Duke of York, June 15, 1797.)

found in the revived efficiency of the law courts. The prosecutions in the North were judiciously entrusted to Arthur Wolfe, the Attorney-General, a man who was already known in the House of Commons, and at the bar, as a most upright and able lawyer; who afterwards, as Lord Kilwarden, presided over the Court of King's Bench, with conspicuous wisdom and humanity, and who at last closed an honourable life by one of the noblest and most pathetic of deaths.[1] His letters to the Government during the September Assizes, fully confirm the high opinion which was formed of his character. At the Monaghan Assizes, he says, both the juries and witnesses discharged their duty. Ten men were capitally convicted. In one case there was a disagreement, one juror dissenting, 'but,' writes the Attorney-General, 'upon the best inquiry, I am certain he is an honest man, and that he was actuated solely by opinion and conscience, and, indeed, I think that there was room for a juror to hesitate.' Many of the prisoners, 'some of them men of wealth, and, I believe, justly suspected,' were released on bail, as an informer, who was the sole witness against them, did not appear, and Wolfe expressed his opinion that this informer was 'a man of bad character,' who had 'certainly charged men not only innocent, but meritoriously active in resisting and detecting sedition.' At Armagh, there were 151 prisoners. Some who were accused of

[1] He was butchered, as is well known, by Robert Emmet's mob in the rising of 1803. Among the Pelham papers will be found a letter, describing his last words, written by Baron Smith to a friend in England. His friends had gathered round, seeing the end to be close at hand. 'Just then a person came in and said to Swan in Lord Kilwarden's hearing, "We have taken four of the villains, what is to be done with them?" Swan, "Executed immediately." Lord Kilwarden (stretching out his hand with effort and difficulty), "Oh, no, Swan, let the poor wretches at least have a fair trial," and almost instantly expired.'

murder, were acquitted, as Wolfe thought, 'very properly,' the evidence being insufficient, and the juries appear to have discharged their duty with fidelity and discrimination. It was, however, a terrible illustration of the condition of the North, that, in spite of the large amount of undetected crime, Judge Chamberlain was compelled to perform 'the awful and most unexampled duty of pronouncing the sentence of death on twenty men together.' Wolfe took the occasion to address the people on their duty. 'I left Dublin,' he wrote, 'a sort of lawyer; I shall become a preacher. In truth, I have more to enforce of moral duty than to encounter of legal argument.'[1]

In one case, though, apparently, only in one, an officer was at this time prosecuted for illegal conduct. He was a lieutenant of the army, who had acted with great and summary violence in the case of a man who was accused of tampering with the soldiers. The Government appear to have done what they could to discountenance such prosecutions, but Lord Yelverton sentenced the officer to three months' imprisonment.[2]

And yet these assizes, which appeared on the whole to have been so properly and so humanely conducted, are memorable for what a crowd of Irish writers have described as one of the blackest of judicial murders; for a trial which certainly left behind it more bitter and enduring memories than any that had occurred in Ireland since that of Father Sheehy. The cry, 'Remember Orr,' which was put forward to rally the insurgents of 1798; the noble and pathetic lines of Drennan, called 'The Wake of William Orr;' the great speech of Curran when defending the newspaper which had assailed the execution; the toast given by Fox at an English ban-

[1] Arthur Wolfe, Sept. 1, 4, 10, 12, 13, 17, 1797.
[2] Ibid. Sept. 4, 1797.

quet 'to the memory of the martyred Orr,' and the sentiment which another English politician is said to have proposed at the same banquet, 'that the Irish Cabinet may soon take the place of William Orr,' sufficiently show the violence of the indignation which it aroused. This case is involved in not a little obscurity and contradiction, and it is not without some misgiving that I undertake to place an outline of it before the reader.

William Orr was a young Presbyterian yeoman or farmer of considerable property, high character, and great local popularity and influence. I have already had occasion to mention him as a strong opponent of assassination at a Committee of the United Irishmen, and it appears to be universally admitted, even by those who most strenuously assert his innocence of the offence for which he was executed, that he was an active member of that society.[1] He was indicted for administering the oath to two soldiers named Wheatley and Lindsay. The Insurrection Act had, for the first time, made that offence a capital one, and the trial of Orr was the first instance in which a prisoner was tried for it. In one of the papers of the United Irishmen which had been seized by the Government, the names of these two soldiers were given as 'being up,' which was the usual phrase for being sworn. They were immediately put under arrest, and examined separately. They both

[1] Thus, Dr. Madden, who strongly maintains that the execution of Orr was a judicial murder, says: 'He was a noted, active, and popular country member of the Society of the United Irishmen. He was executed on account of the notoriety of that circumstance, but not on account of the sufficiency of the evidence, or the justice of the conviction that was obtained against him.' (*United Irishmen*, ii. 254.) Orr never appears to have denied that he was a United Irishman. Drennan writes of him:

'Why cut off in palmy youth?
Truth he spoke, and acted truth.
"Countrymen, unite!" he cried,
And died for what his Saviour died.'

The Wake of William Orr.

agreed in the details of their evidence, and they both swore before a magistrate that the oath had been administered by Orr. The prisoner was left, according to an evil custom which was then but too common in Ireland, for a whole year untried in prison, and he was at last indicted in September 1797. Both soldiers distinctly swore at the trial to the facts, and they stated that the oath was administered at a baronial committee before several persons whom they mentioned by name. None of these persons appeared to rebut the charge. An attempt was made to shake the credit of Wheatley, but in the opinion of the presiding judge it signally failed. The testimony of Lindsay was unimpeached, but he acknowledged, on cross-examination, that he understood nothing of the nature of the oath which he swore. The prosecution was conducted by Wolfe, the Attorney-General, and the presiding judge was Lord Yelverton, one of the most accomplished and merciful men on the Irish Bench. After his death, Curran finely said of him, that 'he could on his deathbed have had no more selfish wish, than that justice should be administered to him in the world to come, in the same spirit with which he distributed it in this;' and although good critics complained that Yelverton was too rapid in forming his impressions when on the bench, no one ever questioned his uprightness, his ability, and his conspicuous humanity. A few months after the execution, Lord Clare in the Irish House of Lords related the circumstances of Orr's trial as I have told them, in the presence of Yelverton, and he begged that if he fell into any inaccuracy, Yelverton would correct him.[1]

The jury, at the conclusion of the trial, had not agreed on their verdict. They were locked up, as was the custom, for the night, but early next morning they

[1] *Debate in the Irish House of Peers, Feb.* 19, 1798, pp. 110–117.

were summoned into court. Truly or falsely, it was stated, in a contemporary account of the trial which was published, that the foreman twice refused to pronounce the word guilty, saying only, 'We leave him in your lordship's mercy.' At last, however, he pronounced Orr to be guilty, but accompanied the verdict with a recommendation to mercy, which Yelverton at once transmitted to Dublin.

So far, it appears to me impossible to conceive a trial more perfectly fair or more calculated to inspire confidence, and no two men could be mentioned less likely than Yelverton and Wolfe to be concerned in anything of the nature of a judicial murder. Two days later, when the sentence was to be pronounced, Curran appeared to move an arrest of judgment on some legal points. At the request of Lord Yelverton, Judge Chamberlain assisted on this occasion on the bench. The first legal points that were raised, were speedily dismissed, and Curran then produced two most extraordinary affidavits. The first, which was sworn by two of the jurymen, stated that when the jury retired to consider their verdict, two bottles of very strong whisky had been passed in to them through the window; that they had drunk the greater part of them, and that some of them 'became very sick and unwell, which occasioned their vomiting before they gave their verdict,' and one of the two jurymen who signed the affidavit, swore also that by age and infirmity, and the intimidation of another juryman, he had been induced to concur in the verdict contrary to his opinion. A third juryman signed alone another affidavit which was of much less importance. There was nothing in it about drinking or intimidation, nor did the deponent assert that he believed Orr to be innocent of the charge on which he was indicted, but he stated that he had resolved to acquit him, and had only agreed to concur in the verdict of the

majority, on the representation of some of his fellow-jurors that a verdict of guilty would not be followed by an execution. It was probably, in accordance with the wishes of this juryman, by a kind of compromise which constantly takes place in jury boxes, that a recommendation to mercy was appended to the verdict. It need hardly be said that the question of punishment is wholly beyond the functions of a jury, and that this last affidavit was not only exceedingly irregular, but was also of a kind to which no weight ought to have been attached.

The two judges pronounced that the affidavits, delivered after the verdict had been duly given and formally received, were no reason for refusing to pass sentence, and Orr was accordingly condemned to death. In this matter there is, I believe, no doubt that the judges acted in strict accordance with the law, but a very grave responsibility now passed to the Executive. Was it right, was it decent, to hang a prisoner when two members of the jury which condemned him, swore that a part at least of the jury were intoxicated when they delivered their verdict, and when one juryman swore that he had been coerced by violence and intimidation into giving a verdict contrary to his belief?

The question was a more difficult one than perhaps might at first sight appear. One part of it—though not the only one which had to be considered—was, to which of two very different categories the case of Orr belonged. Was it the case of a man who was probably or possibly innocent, and who had been wrongfully convicted on insufficient evidence? Or was it a case, such as frequently occurs in Ireland, of a treasonable conspiracy which had failed to procure an acquittal or a disagreement, and which was now making a last desperate effort to save the life of a popular and important member, and by doing so to inflict a damaging defeat on the administration of justice?

It was the strong opinion of the Government that the case belonged to the second category, and that the affidavits were incredible and procured by undue pressure. Lord Yelverton was consulted about the recommendation of the jury. It was stated that for a hundred years there had been no instance in Ireland of such a recommendation not being attended to if it was supported by the presiding judge.[1] But in this case Yelverton declared that the evidence appeared to him to be so clear, and the guilt of the prisoner so undoubted, that he could not conscientiously support the recommendation.[2] The opinion of Wolfe was only second in importance to that of Yelverton, and it is certain that he also was fully satisfied with the justice of the verdict.[3]

The execution was fixed for October 7. Almost immediately after the condemnation, General Lake discovered that a sum of no less than 900 guineas had been collected, and offered to the gaoler if he would allow Orr to escape.[4] This attempt being frustrated, two other extraordinary efforts were made to save the prisoner. The first was an affidavit which was voluntarily sworn by a Dissenting minister named Elder. He stated that in April 1796, which was the very time when Wheatley laid his first information against Orr, he was sent for to visit a soldier who appeared to be

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[1] This was stated by the Attorney-General in the trial of Finerty. See McNevin's *Lives and Trials of Eminent Irishmen*, p. 504.

[2] Lord Clare's *Speech*, pp. 113, 114.

[3] Immediately after it was given, he wrote a letter to Cooke, in which he said: 'I have nothing to add, except that the defence made upon Orr's trial was, in my judgment, supported by subornation only, and that Mr. Curran is to-morrow to move in arrest of judgment upon two grounds, both of which, I am confident enough to say, will fail him.' (Sept. 19, 1797. I.S.P.O.)

[4] Lake to Pelham, Oct. 3, 1797. The deposition of the gaoler is inclosed.

deranged in his mind, and who had attempted to commit suicide. This soldier was Wheatley. Elder found him in a state of extreme excitement and despondency, and he accused himself of a number of grave crimes. He had seduced women in Scotland. In Ireland he had run a man through the body with his bayonet, in an affray which had occurred at the capture of an unlicensed still. In this affray the revenue officer in command was wounded, and afterwards sent to gaol, where he died of his wounds, and the affidavit further states 'that he the said Wheatley was prevailed on to swear against some of the persons who were taken prisoners, a false oath, for which he was afraid they would suffer, which also hung heavy on his mind.' A second affidavit, sworn by a person named Montgomery, who was present at the interview, corroborated the statement of Elder. Nothing in these affidavits had any direct bearing on the case of Orr, but the evidence if it had been produced in court would undoubtedly have done much to shake the credibility of Wheatley; and a third affidavit, sworn by the magistrate who had taken Wheatley's earliest deposition, attempted to carry the defence a step farther. It stated that at the spring assizes of 1797, when there had been a question of bringing Orr to trial, Wheatley had spoken with much alarm about the presence of Elder in Carrickfergus, and had expressed his conviction that 'he was brought there to invalidate his testimony against Orr from a conversation that had passed between him and said Elder' in April 1796.

It is a very common thing after the conclusion of a trial which arouses strong popular passions, to find some piece of evidence stated in public at the last moment in order to invalidate the verdict, which might have been brought, but which was not brought, into court during the trial, and which was, therefore, never

submitted to the searching test of cross-examination. Few things in the eyes of a lawyer are more suspicious than such evidence, and it is only in very rare cases, and usually when some grave doubt had already hung over the issue of the trial, that any stress is placed upon it. Nor can it be denied that it would be in the highest degree detrimental to the interests of justice if prisoners were encouraged to hold back a portion of their defence until it could no longer be tested by inquiry, or with the object of obtaining a second trial. In this case it will be observed that the evidence of Lindsay was absolutely unimpeached; that no motive for the pretended perjury of Wheatley was suggested; that the confession of perjury which Wheatley was represented as having made, related solely to another case, in which he was personally implicated, and that he was alleged to have made it when suffering from mental derangement. The execution, however, was respited till the 10th, and afterwards till the 14th of October, in order that further inquiry should be made. 'Orr's respite,' wrote a Government official from Belfast, 'has caused great exultation through every disaffected part of the northern district,' and the same official proceeds to describe the desperate efforts that were made to save the prisoner. Two of the jurymen who condemned him, did not dare to leave their homes after nightfall. Every effort of intimidation as well as of solicitation was employed to procure signatures to a petition to the Lord Lieutenant, and the writer concluded by expressing his own belief that if Orr was pardoned, no jury would convict.[1]

The second step taken to prevent the execution was of a different kind. Orr's brother made an application to the High Sheriff of the county, and to one of the

[1] Lucius Barber (Belfast), Oct. 10, 1797.

members for Belfast, to sign a memorial for the pardon of the prisoner. These gentlemen adopted a course which was certainly humane, and which under the circumstances appears to me to have been wise. They promised that they would sign such a memorial, but only on the condition that Orr confessed his guilt, and in that case one of them further promised to endeavour to procure the signatures of the other members of the grand jury. A full confession of guilt was accordingly drawn up. It was stated to have been submitted to Orr, and to have been signed by him. It was sent to the Lord Lieutenant, and its substance was published, as 'from the best and most respectable authority,' in the 'Belfast News Letter.'[1] Orr, however, soon after its publication is said to have written to the Lord Lieutenant, thanking him for the respite that had been granted, but at the same time reasserting his innocence and formally denying that he had signed this confession;[2] and in the Declaration which was distributed at his execution, but which had been drawn up nearly ten days previously,[3] he reiterated this repudiation with great emphasis. 'A false and ungenerous publication,' he wrote, 'having appeared in a newspaper stating certain alleged confessions of guilt on my part, and thus striking at my reputation, which is dearer to me than life, I take this solemn method of contradicting that calumny. I was applied to by the High Sheriff and the Rev. W. Bristow, Sovereign of Belfast, to make a confession of guilt, who used entreaties to that effect. This I peremptorily refused. Did I think myself

[1] Sept. 29, 1797.

[2] This letter is dated Oct. 10. It was first printed in the *Press*, and will be also found in McCormick's *Life and Trial of William Orr*. There is no allusion to it, either in the speech of Clare in the House of Lords, or in the speech of Curran in the Finerty trial.

[3] Oct. 5.

guilty, I should be free to confess it; but, on the contrary, I glory in my innocence.'

The truth of this statement is open to very grave doubt. When it was published immediately after the death of Orr, the two gentlemen referred to at once denied it,[1] and they wrote to the 'Belfast News Letter' giving their version of what had occurred. On the 27th of the preceding month they said they had together visited Orr in gaol. 'Mr. Bristow said to him, "Sir, I have seen a paper which your brother and another gentleman brought to the Sheriff on Monday last, with your name annexed to it, in which you acknowledged the justice of your sentence, and cautioned others against being led into bad practices by wicked and designing men." Mr. Bristow added that "it was expected, from what your brother and that gentleman told the Sheriff, that it would have been published in last Monday's Belfast paper." "I am confident," said Mr. Bristow to Mr. Orr, "that this acknowledgment, which you had for some time withheld, must now afford you great comfort!" Mr. Orr replied, "Yes, sir, it has relieved my mind very much."' The two gentlemen then proceed to say that Mr. Bristow urged Orr to reveal any further fact that might throw light on the conspiracy, but that Orr said he could at present remember nothing more. This, the High Sheriff and the Sovereign of Belfast declared, was to the best of their recollection exactly what occurred, and in order to give their statement the utmost weight, they attested it on oath before a magistrate.[2] On the other hand, the

[1] Andrew McNevin (Carrickfergus) sent to the Government, Orr's dying declaration; mentioned his emphatic denial of the confession, but added: 'Mr. Skiffington and the Rev. Mr. Bristow can testify on oath, that the declaration or confession forwarded to his Excellency was acknowledged by W. Orr to be his, and that his mind was light after it.' (Oct. 14, 1797.)

[2] *Belfast News Letter*, Oct. 16, 20, 1797.

brother of Orr published a letter, to the truth of which he said he also was prepared to swear, in which he stated that he had tried in vain to induce the condemned man to sign the confession of guilt, and that having failed in all his efforts, and in hopes of saving his brother's life, he had himself signed it in his brother's name, but without his privity or consent.[1]

The reader must form his own estimate of these conflicting statements. Notwithstanding the hopes which had naturally been raised by the repeated respites, the Government ultimately decided that the sentence should be carried out. A paragraph, which was inserted, no doubt, by authority, in the 'Belfast News Letter,' announcing this decision, stated that Pelham had written to the High Sheriff intimating that the respite had been granted for the purpose of enabling the Lord Lieutenant to consult Lord Yelverton and Judge Chamberlain, 'as to certain papers which had been transmitted relative to one of the witnesses on whose testimony Mr. Orr was condemned;' that both judges were of opinion that these papers did not impeach the verdict, and that the law must, therefore, take its course.[2] From the statement of Lord Clare, it would appear that the affidavits which had been made after the verdict had been delivered, were not brought formally before the Lord Lieutenant, and that the decision was taken mainly on the ground that the judge who presided at the trial declared himself fully satisfied with the verdict.[3] Orr

[1] *Belfast News Letter*, Oct. 20, 1797; McNevin's *Trials*, p. 493.

[2] Ibid. Oct. 13, 1797.

[3] The following is Lord Clare's own defence of the Government. 'His Excellency, notwithstanding the declaration of the learned Lord [the judge], respited Mr. Orr; to give time for inquiry whether any justifiable ground could be laid for extending mercy to him; and finding that nothing could be substantiated to shake the justice of his conviction, the unhappy man was left for execution. The affidavits which I have stated never were laid before the Lord Lieutenant, but if they

met his fate with courage and dignity, professed with his last breath that he died in the true faith of a Presbyterian, and distributed as he went to the gallows his dying declaration, in which he asserted his innocence and declared the informer to be forsworn. 'If to have loved my country,' he wrote, 'to have known its wrongs, to have felt the injuries of the persecuted Catholics, and to have united with them and all other religious persuasions in the most orderly and least sanguinary means of procuring redress—if these be felonies, I am a felon, but not otherwise.' It was observed, however, that these declarations were not wholly unequivocal. The prisoner who protested his innocence had always maintained that the oath of the United Irishmen was not only innocent, but laudable, and the witness who was said to be forsworn had sworn an obligation of secrecy.[1]

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had, is there a man with a trace of the principles of justice in his mind, who will say that such affidavits ought to be attended to? Is it to be supposed that a judge would receive a verdict from a jury in a state of intoxication? or was it ever heard that a juryman was received, by voluntary affidavit, to impeach a verdict in which he had concurred? Will any man with a trace of criminal justice in his mind, say that a voluntary affidavit of a person not produced, unexamined at the trial, ought to be received after conviction, to impeach the credit of a witness who was examined and cross-examined, and whose credit stood unimpeached by legal evidence? If such an affidavit were to lay the necessary foundation of a pardon after conviction, I will venture to say there is no man who may be convicted hereafter of any crime, however atrocious, that will not be able to obtain a similar affidavit.' (Lord Clare's speech, *Debate in the House of Peers, Feb.* 19, 1798, p. 114.)

[1] A short contemporary account of the trial of William Orr was printed in 1797. Clare spoke of it as 'a partial and garbled report.' It is now very rare, but the substance was reprinted in a little book called McCormick's *Life and Trial of Orr*. The affidavits and other leading documents connected with the case will be found in McNevin's *Lives and Trials of Eminent Irishmen*, in the introduction to the trial of Peter Finerty (the editor of the *Press*). That trial arose out of an attack on Lord Camden's conduct relating to the

I have now laid before the reader a very full account of this memorable and most unhappy case. If by a judicial murder be meant the execution of a man who was probably innocent of the charge for which he was condemned, that term does not, in my opinion, apply to the death of Orr. On the other hand, to execute a criminal after two members of the jury which condemned him had sworn that intoxication had prevailed in the jury box when the verdict was considering, and that intimidation had been successfully employed to obtain unanimity; to treat such an affidavit, after it had been formally laid before the court, with simple neglect, was a course which appears to me to have been well fitted to shake confidence in the administration of justice. Great as might have been the evils that would have arisen from the escape of Orr, I can hardly think that they would have been so great as those which arose from the feeling of deep, passionate, indignant sympathy which the fate of this young Presbyterian farmer evoked, not only throughout Ulster, but throughout the whole of Catholic Ireland. I have given, in Lord Clare's own words, the defence of the Government. The speech in which Curran defended the writer in the 'Press' who had denounced the execution as a judicial murder, shows how powerfully the other side could be presented

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case. The speech of Curran in defence of Finerty is the best statement of the case for Orr, while the opposite side was fully stated by Lord Clare in his speech in the House of Lords. See, too, Madden's *United Irishmen*, ii. 253–258; and the *Belfast News Letter*, Oct. 1797. Musgrave says that Father Quigly and two Presbyterian ministers, who attended Orr after his condemnation, 'persuaded him that he was not guilty of any crime, and that they could reanimate him;' that his body, after being hung, was brought to a Presbyterian meeting house, where a medical man vainly tried to restore him to life by transfusing the blood of a calf into his veins; and that pieces of his clothing were afterwards preserved as relics in every part of the kingdom. (*Rebellions in Ireland*, p. 178.)

by a great advocate. If, he said in effect to the jury, you had known that Orr was apprehended on the charge of abjuring the bigotry which had torn and disgraced his country, pledging himself to restore the people to their place in the Constitution, and binding himself never to betray his fellow-labourers in that enterprise; that he had been left untried in prison for twelve tedious months; that he had been condemned by a drunken and worn-out and terrified jury; that members of this jury, when returning sobriety had brought back their consciences, had implored the humanity of the bench and the mercy of the Crown to save them from eternal self-condemnation, and their souls from the indelible stain of innocent blood; that new and hitherto unheard-of crimes had been discovered against the informer; that a respite had been granted no less than three times, and the hopes of the prisoner and his family thus raised to the highest point, and that, notwithstanding this, he had been brought to the gallows, and had died with a solemn declaration of his innocence, and uttering with his last breath a prayer for the liberty of his country—if you had known all this, and had then been asked to describe it, what language would you have used?

The general judgment which will be formed of the policy and proceedings of the Irish Government at this time, and of the share of responsibility that belongs to them in hastening on the rebellion which was manifestly impending, will vary much according to the character of the reader, and perhaps still more according to the political predisposition with which he reviews the facts that have been related. It is manifestly absurd to describe the severities in Ulster as if they were unprovoked by a savage outburst of anarchy and crime, or to deny that in the midst of a great war, and with the extreme probability of a French invasion of Ireland, the disarming of a disaffected province had become urgently

necessary. The rigour and violence of the measures that were adopted were chiefly due to the complete inadequacy of normal means for repressing widespread and organised revolt; to the want of any such body as the modern constabulary; to the military exigency which made it necessary in time of war to entrust semi-police functions to an undisciplined yeomanry. Those measures were judged as might have been expected in a country which, for more than a hundred years, had known nothing of martial law. In countries which were, in this respect at least, less happily situated, they would have excited less astonishment, and they will appear pale and insignificant when compared with the proceedings of those French revolutionists who were extolled by the United Irishmen as ideal champions of Liberty and Progress. The Insurrection Act was an extreme remedy for a desperate disease, limited to a brief period and to the proclaimed districts. Even the burning of houses, though unauthorised by law and eminently fitted to infuriate the people, can hardly be regarded as indefensible as a military measure, if it was found to be the necessary condition of carrying out a necessary disarming.

But although all this may, I think, be truly said, the faults of the Irish government during the few years before the rebellion of 1798 appear to me to have been enormously great, and a weight of tremendous responsibility rests upon those who conducted it. By habitual corruption and the steady employment of the system of nomination boroughs, they had reduced the Irish Legislature to a condition of such despicable and almost ludicrous subserviency, that a policy which was probably supported by the great majority of educated Irishmen, could not command more than twenty or thirty votes in the House of Commons. They had done this at a time when the French Revolution had made the public mind

in the highest degree sensitive to questions of representation; at a time when the burden of the war was imposing extraordinary hardships on the people. They had resisted the very moderate Reform Bills of Ponsonby and Grattan, which would have left the overwhelming preponderance of political power in the hands of property, loyalty, and intelligence, as strenuously as the wild democratic schemes of the United Irishmen, and they had thus thrown into the path of treason a crowd of able and energetic men, who might have been contented by reform. No one who follows the history of the long succession of dangerous conventions which had existed in Ireland since 1782, can doubt that the Convention Act, making illegal, delegated and representative assemblies other than Parliament, was required; but it could be justified and acquiesced in, only on the condition that the popular branch of the Legislature was in some real sense a representative body; and to this condition the Irish Government was inexorably opposed.

The management of the Catholic question had been still more disastrous—disastrous not only in what was denied, but also in much that was granted. The Relief Act of 1793 had deluged the county constituencies with an overwhelming multitude of illiterate Catholic 40*s*. freehold voters, who were totally unfit for the exercise of political power; who were certain at some future time to become a great political danger, and whose enfranchisement added enormously to the difficulty and danger of reforming the Parliament, while it still left the Catholics under the brand of inferiority, excluded the Catholic gentry from Parliament, and thus deprived them of political influence at the very period when their services were most needed. At the same time, by the fatal error of not connecting—as might then most easily have been done—the college for the education of the priesthood with the University of

the country, they prepared the way for an evil of the most serious kind.

The recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, under circumstances that were calculated to inflame to the utmost, popular passions; the deliberate appeal by the Government to the sectarian spirit among the Protestants, and Pelham's language of eternal proscription against the Catholics, soon completed the work. The loyal and respectable, though unfortunately small and timid, body of Catholic gentry lost all power and influence, and the guidance of the Catholics passed into the hands of seditious demagogues in the towns, who were in close alliance with the United Irishmen. At the same time the transportation by Lord Carhampton of multitudes of suspected persons to the fleet, without a shadow of legal justification; the Act of Indemnity, by which the Irish Parliament closed the doors of the law courts against those who sought for redress, and the shameful apathy shown towards the earliest outrages of the Orange banditti in the North, convinced great masses of the poor, that they were out of the protection of the law. It is not true that the Government inspired or approved of those outrages; but when it was found that a proclamation which specifically condemned the crimes of the Defenders, was silent about those of the Orangemen; that a parliamentary inquiry into these outrages, though repeatedly asked for, was always refused; and that hundreds, and possibly thousands, of Catholics, were obliged by terror to fly from their homes, at a time when Ulster was full of English troops, it cannot be wondered at that the Catholics should have come to look on themselves as completely unprotected, and should have been well prepared to receive the seditious teaching which was so abundantly diffused. In the summer and autumn of 1797 Ulster had grown more quiet, but evidence was almost daily pouring in,

that all Catholic Ireland was passing rapidly into active sedition.

It is not surprising that it should have been so. Anarchy is like a cancer, which, once it has effected a lodgment in one portion of the body politic, will inevitably spread. Already, the Catholics of Ulster, as well as of one or two adjoining counties, and the Catholic leaders in Dublin, were thoroughly disaffected, while in many other counties the great mass of the Catholic peasantry were organised as Defenders; and Defenderism, as we have seen, though essentially a Whiteboy movement, and aiming at Whiteboy objects, was now in connection or alliance with the United Irishmen, and hoped to attain its objects by a French invasion and a consequent revolution.

It is important, however, to form a clear idea of the true motives that agitated the great Catholic masses. Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, which were the original and ostensible objects of the United Irishmen, had probably no place among them. The refusal of emancipation had been important in decisively turning a number of active Catholics in the towns to rebellion. It had a negative influence in withholding from loyal leaders influence and power, and in maintaining the broad political distinction between the two creeds; but both Lord Clare and the most intelligent leaders of the United Irishmen fully agreed with General Knox, that to the overwhelming majority of the Catholic people of Ireland, it was a matter of utter indifference. At a much later period, the combined influence of O'Connell and the priests made it a really popular question, but this time had not yet come.[1]

[1] In the very instructive examinations of Emmet and McNevin by the Secret Committee in 1798, this fact was clearly brought out. 'Lord Chancellor: "Pray do you think Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform any objects with the common

A very similar remark may be made about parliamentary reform. To the illiterate Catholic cottiers and small farmers, who covered three out of the four provinces of Ireland, questions of this kind could have but little significance. For itself, they cared nothing, but the United Irishmen, who clearly saw this, tried to persuade them that a reform of Parliament must be followed by the abolition of tithes.

The tithe question, on the other hand, was one of real and passionate popular interest, and it had borne a prominent part in almost every agrarian disturbance of the century. The object of the leaders of the United Irishmen was a complete abolition of religious establishments, as in France; they continually, and, no doubt, sincerely, denied that they had the smallest wish to set up a Catholic establishment, or that they believed such an idea to be entertained by the Catholics; and they added, that any such attempt would encounter their

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people?" Emmet: "As to Catholic emancipation, I don't think it matters a feather, or that the poor think of it. As to parliamentary reform, I don't think the common people ever thought of it until it was inculcated to them, that a reform would cause a removal of those grievances which they actually do feel. From that time, I believe, they have become very much attached to the measure."' McNevin's evidence (which he republished in full, as he thought it unfairly abridged in the parliamentary report) is to the same effect. 'Lord Chancellor: "Do you think the mass of the people in the provinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught care the value of this pen, or the drop of ink it contains, for parliamentary reform or Catholic emancipation?" McNevin: "I am sure they do not, if by the mass of the people your lordship means the common illiterate people; they do not understand it. What they very well understand is, that it would be a very great advantage to them to be relieved from the payment of tithes, and not to be fleeced by their landlords; but there is not a man who can read a newspaper, who has not considered the question of reform. . . . As to Catholic emancipation, the importance of that question has passed away long since; it really is not worth a moment's thought at the present period."' (McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 199, 200, 221; see, too, p. 206.)

strenuous resistance. With the mass of the Catholic peasantry, the question was not, I believe, one of privilege or establishment. It was a desire to be relieved from a heavy and unequal burden, which pressed most severely on the poorest cottiers; which was greatly aggravated by the system of tithe proctors, and by the constant disputes about new and old tithes; which was levied directly on the produce of the soil, and which was levied for the benefit of the clergy of another creed. To abolish this impost was one of their most earnest and unwavering desires, and it is probable that if this had been done they would have cared very little for the existence of the Establishment. We have seen how earnestly, in three successive years, Grattan had pressed upon the Irish Government and Parliament the vital necessity of dealing with this question; how he had proposed schemes for commutation, which would probably have completely allayed the discontent; how Pitt, at a still earlier period, had suggested the same policy; and how the Irish Government had steadily resisted it.[1] The tithe grievance was now the chief political bond between the Presbyterians of the North and the Catholics of the South; and the fact that the French had begun their Revolution by abolishing tithes, was one of the chief motives put forward for welcoming a French invasion.

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 458–460. Both McNevin and Emmet in their examinations strongly expressed their personal desire to abolish all religious establishments in Ireland, but both of them acknowledged that the great mass of the Catholics would have been contented with a much smaller measure. 'Sure I am, sir,' said McNevin, 'that if tithes had been commuted according to Mr. Grattan's plan, a very powerful engine would have been taken out of our hands.' 'If any other way of paying even a Protestant establishment,' said Emmet, 'which did not bear so sensibly on their industry, were to take place, I believe it would go a great way to content them [the Catholics]; though I confess it would not content me.' (McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 212, 228.)

After the question of tithes, but after it at a considerable distance, came the question of rent. I have described the great and sudden increase of rents which corn bounties and war prices had produced, and the way in which it acted on different classes of the community. The many instances of hardship and distress which followed, had an undoubted part in producing Catholic disaffection; and hopes of a lowering of rents, and, still more, of a great agrarian revolution, or confiscation of lands, to be carried out by French assistance, were abroad. At the same time, while the question of tithes appeared habitually, the question of rents only appeared occasionally, in the popular appeals, and it was not, in the main, a question between the owner and the occupier of land. The frequent conduct of landlords in setting up leases to auction, had, no doubt, contributed to the evil, but the great majority of extortionate rents were exacted not by landlords, but by tenants—by the race of middlemen and landjobbers, who held tracts of land upon lease, subdivided them into small plots, and sublet them at an enormous profit.

There was another influence, which was not the less serious because it was somewhat more indefinite in its character. It was a vague feeling of separate nationality, which was thrilling powerfully through the Catholic masses. The events of history had divided the inhabitants of Ireland into two distinct and separate nations, divided broadly in creed, and, in some measure, in character and in race, and one of these was an ascendant and governing nation, which had displaced, by conquest, the old rulers and possessors of the soil.[1]

[1] See a very remarkable letter of Alexander Knox upon the unexampled clearness with which, owing to their religious difference, the conquering and the conquered races in Ireland have both preserved their separate identities. (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 221, 222.)

A keen sense of the danger of this situation was the keynote of the whole policy of Grattan. In all that he accomplished, and in all that he aimed at, it was his main object to make the Irish one people, instead of two, to soften and efface the old lines of distinction, by blending in the Government and in the Legislature, the representatives of the rival creeds. For some years, this policy seemed destined to succeed. Time had dimmed the memory of old conflicts and confiscations. Religious animosities had subsided. Nearly all the penal code had been abolished. A large share of political power had been conceded to the Catholics. Although the ownership of land was still, almost exclusively, in Protestant hands, there was no longer any law to prevent Catholics from acquiring it, and a great amount of Catholic property, in mortgages and other forms, was now identified with the established disposition of property. Increasing material prosperity was raising up a wealthy class among them, and their most energetic and ambitious members no longer sought a career in France, or Austria, or Spain. It was the dream of Grattan that a loyal Irish gentry of both denominations could form a governing body who would complete the work, and that, although a Protestant ascendency would continue, it would be the modified and mitigated ascendency which naturally belongs to the most educated section of the community and to the chief owners of property, and not an ascendency defined by creeds, and based on disqualifying laws. But, from the time when the principles of the French Revolution took root in Ireland, and, still more, after the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, events had taken another turn. The new democratic leaders were chiefly Protestants, and they aimed, like Grattan, though by very different methods, and on a very different basis, at union between Catholics and Protestants, and the

abolition of religious disqualifications; but the result of their movement was a furious revival of religious animosities, and a panic among the possessors of property, which greatly deepened the division of classes. At the same time, the extreme probability of a French conquest of Ireland, and the tremendous events on the Continent, which foreshadowed nothing less than a total destruction of the whole political and social order in Europe, and the downfall of the British Empire, aroused hopes in the Catholic population which had slumbered for more than a century. Prophecies, attributed to St. Columkill, pointing to the reinstatement of the old race, and the expulsion of the stranger, had circulated in Ireland during the great troubles of 1641. They were now, once more, passing from lip to lip, and vague, wild hopes, of a great coming change were rapidly spreading.

Another point in which the situation resembled that of 1641, was the belief which was fast growing among the Catholics, that they were marked out for massacre. In the seventeenth century the Catholic population had been driven to madness, by the belief that the English Puritans were about to exterminate their creed. At the end of the eighteenth century a similar fear prevailed, but the object of terror was the Orangeman.[1] It was asserted by the newspapers of

[1] The following is part of one of the depositions sworn in 1643: 'They told this deponent that the Scotch had petitioned the Parliament Houses of England that there should not be a Papist left alive in England, Ireland, or Scotland; and that some of the committee employed out of Ireland in England for Irish affairs, having notice thereof, writ over unto them in Ireland to rise in arms and take all the strongholds and forts herein to their hands, or to that effect; and that they commanding the rebels now expected the fulfilling of Columkill's prophecy, which, as they did construe it, was that the Irish should conquer Ireland again, or to that effect.' (Hickson's *Irish Massacres of* 1641, ii. 142, 143.) Compare with this, a letter of Cooke to Pelham (Dec.

the United Irishmen, and it was taught and believed in every quarter of Ireland, that the secret oath sworn by every Orangeman was, 'I will be true to the King and Government, and I will exterminate, as far as I am able, the Catholics of Ireland.'

Whether such a statement was a pure calumny, or whether any such oath may have been in use among the banditti, who were wrecking by night the homes of Catholic farmers in Armagh and in some adjoining counties, it is impossible to say. The charge was like that which was afterwards brought against the Catholic insurgents, of designing nothing less than a massacre of the whole Protestant population. In both cases it was essentially false, but in both cases it may have derived some colour of plausibility from the frantic utterances and the ferocious actions of excited fanatics. In the Orange Society, as organised by the Ulster gentry, there was no oath even distantly resembling what was alleged, and the masters of all the Orange lodges in Ulster had, as we have seen, most emphatically disclaimed any wish to persecute the Catholics. But the seed had been already scattered among an ignorant, credulous, and suspicious peasantry. The United Irishmen persistently represented the Orange

23, 1797): 'Reports are propagated among the lower Catholics, that the Orangemen are to rise and murder them. Other reports, that not a Protestant is to be left in Ireland by the 25th of March. Confraternities of Carmelites are establishing near Dublin by the priests, and some old silly prophecy of Columkill is circulated among them, which gives Ireland this year to the Spaniards.' The Committee of Secrecy printed an example of the pretended Orange rules, which were fabricated for the purpose of exciting the passions of the Catholics. (Appendix No. xxvi.) Some curious particulars about the pretended prophecies that were circulated on the eve of the rebellion of 1798, will be found in that interesting book, McSkimin's *History of the Irish Rebellion in Antrim, Down, and Derry*, pp. 48–50. Among them were some attributed to Thomas the Rhymer, and others of the Scotch Covenanter, Alexander Peden.

Society as a society created for the extermination of the Catholics, by men high in rank and office, and under the direct patronage of the Government, and they were accustomed to contrast its pretended oath with that of the United Irishman, which bound him only to endeavour to form a brotherhood of affection among Irishmen of every religious persuasion; to labour for the attainment of an equal, full, and adequate representation of all the people of Ireland in Parliament; and never, either directly or indirectly, to inform or give evidence against any member of the society.[1] This was probably their most successful mode of propagandism, and the panic which it created had, as we shall see, a great part in producing the horrors that followed. It is, however, a curious fact, that the fear of the Orangemen appears to have been most operative upon populations who came in no direct contact with them. The worst scenes of the insurrection were in Wexford, where the Society had never penetrated; while in Ulster, and in Connaught, which was full of fugitives from Ulster, the rebellion assumed a far milder form.

In the beginning of 1797, the United Ireland movement was powerful in Dublin, and had overspread all or the greater part of Ulster, but beyond these limits it had probably no considerable influence, except in the counties of West Meath and Meath, where it entered in the wake of Defenderism. In the first months of the year, there was a sudden and most ferocious and alarming outburst of Defenderism in the King's County. All the houses over a large area were plundered. The depredators 'put several of the honest inhabitants on the fire, to induce them to deliver up their arms and money.' The house of a Mr. Bagenal was set on fire. The owner and his wife were both murdered, and shots

[1] See e.g. *The Beauties of the Press*, pp. 152, 153.

were fired at his children. The magistrates, as early as February 17, petitioned the Lord Lieutenant to proclaim certain portions of the county, but more than two months passed before their request was attended to. In the mean time they succeeded in capturing some fifty prisoners, and in obtaining two witnesses; but when the assizes came, these witnesses were so intimidated, that they denied in the witness box everything they had sworn before the magistrate. Confident in impunity, the outrages now burst out with renewed violence. Every night there were robberies; the robbers brought fire to the farmers' houses, and threatened to put it on the thatches, and to treat the owners 'as they did the Bagenals,' unless they surrendered their money and arms; and they made it a special object to seize the swords and pistols of the yeomanry, who generally lived in small thatched houses. The magistrates wrote, that if this continued, the yeomen would soon be totally disarmed, and therefore useless; that it was hopeless attempting to get evidence; that great numbers of the peasantry were being sworn into the organisation; that nothing short of the proclamation of a portion of the county could stay the evil, and that there were already signs that it was spreading to the adjoining county of Kildare. One serious check was encountered by the Defenders in the King's County. A large party, after midnight, attacked Castle Carberry near Clonard, the house of a gentleman named Sparks, but they found the owner fully prepared, and after a heavy fire, which lasted for more than an hour, they retired, leaving six of their number dead, and several others badly wounded.[1]

[1] John Tyrell (Clonard), April 26; Mr. Everard (near Edenderry), April 26; Mr. Sparks, May 14, 1797. There are several other papers written in May, about the King's County, in the I.S.P.O.

The circle of contagion was rapidly expanding. A letter written on May 1 by a magistrate of Enniscorthy, in the county of Wexford—the town which was afterwards the centre of the most horrible scenes of the rebellion—described that county as being still 'perfectly quiet and well disposed,' and the writer said that, although he knew of some turbulent and disaffected characters, and had heard of some attempts to administer oaths, he did not believe that a single person had yet been sworn in, though, he added, 'the neighbouring parts of the counties of Carlow and Kilkenny are by no means so quiet.' Very soon, however, we find seditious papers industriously scattered through this county and through the county of Carlow; and by November, Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Wexford, and Wicklow were all tainted.[1] One Carlow magistrate wrote, that in that county alone there were at least 3,000 United Irishmen, that almost the whole district that lay between the counties of Wicklow, Wexford, and Kilkenny was 'United,' and that additional troops were urgently required.[2] An intercepted letter of a United Irishman boasted that in a single week 26,741 persons had been 'United' in the counties of Meath, Wicklow, Louth, and Dublin; and predicted that 'in a little time all the people of Ireland would be of one way of thinking.'[3]

In Wexford, Wicklow, and for the most part in Carlow, the spread of disaffection appears at this time to have been unaccompanied by crime; but in Kilkenny, Defender outrages were of frequent occurrence, and in the county of Kildare there was a perfect reign of terror. A man named Nicholson, who had assisted in conducting a prisoner to gaol, had his house burnt; he was

[1] Cæsar Colclough (Enniscorthy), May 1, 29; Edward Croker, May 15; Rev. T. Hardwick, May 18; Hon. B. O. Strafford, June 1797.

[2] Mr. Rochfort, Nov. 2, 1797.

[3] J. C. Hamilton, May 1797.

afterwards dragged out of a farmer's house and pierced by some fifty pikes; the murderers then returned to the farmhouse and deliberately murdered his wife; and such was the terror that reigned, that it is stated that there would have been no inquest or inquiry of any sort, but for the intervention of a party of soldiers from Kildare. Letter after letter came to the Castle describing the growing anarchy, and imploring the Government to send down fresh troops.[1]

In Kildare the situation was much aggravated by the strong political opposition of the chief gentry to the Government. In May, the Duke of Leinster and most of the principal magistrates of the county signed a requisition to the High Sheriff, asking him to call a meeting of the magistrates and freeholders; and on his refusal, they resolved to meet without his consent. The meeting was prohibited by the Government, and they then drew up the petition to the King to which I have already alluded, accusing the ministry of having, by their corruption and system of irritation, produced the disorders of the country, and predicting that, unless reform and Catholic emancipation were speedily granted, the contest must lead to bloodshed and rebellion, and might terminate in a complete alienation of affection from England, and in the separation of Ireland from the Empire.[2] An attorney of no very high character,

[1] Captain Neville (Naas), Nov. 2; Lord Carrick (Kilkenny), Nov. 16; John Wolfe (Balbriggan), Nov. 22, 1797. This last writer, who describes the murder of Nicholson and his wife, adds, that about twenty-seven years before, the great smuggler, Morty Oge O'Sullivan, was much annoyed by a revenue officer named Puxley. O'Sullivan, with his brother-in-law Connell, waylaid and killed Puxley, who had his wife with him. Connell wanted to kill the woman also, but O'Sullivan replied, 'What, do you think me so base a scoundrel as to lift my hand to woman!' 'Strange alteration,' adds the writer, 'in the Irish character, long noted for humanity!'

[2] Wogan Brown (high sheriff) to Pelham, May 29, 1797.

named John Pollock, was at this time Crown prosecutor for Leinster, and much in the confidence of the Government, and he has left an interesting, though probably a somewhat partisan, description of the summer assizes in a considerable part of Leinster. In Carlow he found 'no appearance of any political party whatever,' but in Kildare there was 'a most decided and unequivocal determination to subvert the King's Government.' In every case growing out of the disturbances, the prisoner was supported by the countenance of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Lawless, and every Roman Catholic on the grand jury. The agent and confidential friend of Lord Edward 'challenged the jurors for the prisoners, and appeared the executive officer of sedition and rebellion.' 'A rooted and desperate rebellion' had been planted in the county. There were 'notorious and decided rebels on the grand jury,' who disclosed the evidence of the Crown to the prisoners, and openly encouraged refractory jurymen. In the King's County outrages were numerous and sanguinary, but the adjoining Queen's County was, as usual, perfectly tranquil.[1]

The reports disseminated about the murderous intentions of the Orangemen, played a great part in these disturbances. No other means were so successfully employed to drive the Catholics to desperation. In the county of Carlow, some of the Protestant gentry, combining to maintain the peace of the county in the midst of smothered rebellion, very injudiciously affiliated their association to the Orange organisation in Ulster, and

[1] J. Pollock, Aug. 30, 1797. Pollock was aware of McNally's connection with the Government; he communicated constantly with him, and reports that McNally thought himself cruelly neglected by his friends. An extremely unfavourable account of Pollock, and of his dealings with prisoners, will be found in the *Narrative* of the Rev. Dr. Dickson, a Presbyterian minister implicated in the conspiracy. (Pp. 65–75.)

thus gave a pretext to the agitators which was abundantly used.[1] On one occasion two well-dressed men rode in the dead of night through a village about three miles from Carlow, and rapping at every door, warned the inhabitants to fly, as the Orangemen were on the march from Carlow to burn their houses, and slaughter every Catholic they met. The panic was so intense, that the whole population fled for shelter and protection to a neighbouring magistrate.[2] At Nenagh, in the county of Tipperary, a placard was posted on the chapel door informing the people that every Orangeman was bound by his oath to exterminate the Catholics, and pointing out by name to the popular vengeance a number of persons in the town who were said to be Orangemen.[3] 'The terror,' wrote Lord Camden, 'which was occasioned in a part of the county of Wicklow not seventeen miles from Dublin, from the report which has been sent into that county by the Dublin committees, that the Orangemen were to march into it and murder the Catholics, was such, that those miserable, ignorant, and deluded persons left their houses and lay in the fields, and at last assembled in large numbers for their own protection.' 'This alarm,' the Lord Lieutenant continues, 'of the designs of the Orangemen was really created in some parts; in others it was used as a pretext for mutiny.'[4]

The anarchy and disaffection in Leinster prevailed chiefly in the counties I have mentioned, but even outside this area there were disquieting symptoms. At Clondalkin, within a few miles of Dublin, housebreaking outrages were going on which bore an ominous resem-

[1] See a letter from W. Elliot to Pelham, Aug. 7, 1798.

[2] *Faulkner's Journal*, Jan. 13, 1798.

[3] Camden to Portland, Nov. 15, 1797.

[4] Ibid. See, too, Gordon's *History of Ireland*, ii. 357; Gordon's *History of the Rebellion of* 1798, pp. 30–32.

blance to those of the Defenders;[1] and a curious and interesting letter of Sir Edward Newenham, who had been recently staying in the hill country of Tipperary, throws some light on the state of that county. He had been talking, he said, very freely to the farmers, and found that they expected many thousands of French soon to come, and the Protestants of the North to assist the Catholics of the South. A number of pedlars, speaking an accent which was not that of the county, had recently been distributing multitudes of seditious papers, which they carried in secret drawers under their boxes, and there was a widely spread belief that tithes would never again be paid, and that land would be equally divided. 'From the unreserved manner,' concluded Newenham, 'in which these mountaineers spoke to me, I am confident the northern spirit of rebellion has got generally among them, and if they get any strength, they will endanger the peace of the whole island; for, led by their clergy, they will be more fatal in assassination (*sic*) than those of the North.'[2]

We may now turn to Munster, which had been so signally loyal when a French fleet lay in Bantry Bay, and when the landing of the French army seemed a question of hours. For some weeks after that alarm had passed, all remained quiet in the South, and the most serious incident in General Dalrymple's letters was the flight to France in an American vessel of the military secretary of General Massey, who was well acquainted with military affairs in the South of Ireland.[3] In April, however, the clouds of disaffection were beginning to creep stealthily, but visibly, over the hori-

[1] Mr. Caldbeck (Dublin), Nov. 17, 1797.

[2] Sir E. Newenham, May 31, 1797. Higgins notices the great use made of pedlars by the chief conspirators. (F. H., Sept. 27, 1797.)

[3] Dalrymple to Pelham, March 19, 1797.

zon. Dalrymple wrote from Cork, that 'a large proportion of the country people are disaffected, and industrious to render others so;' that Lord Bandon reported signs of perfidy among the yeomen; that a spirit of disorder was increasing, he knew not why, and that some woods had been lately cut down to make pikes. 'The character of the times taken at Cork is indifference; the loss of trade and its advantages seems to have much done away that ardour so much boasted of formerly.'[1] Still, in the beginning of May, Camden wrote: 'The South of Ireland is not in any considerable degree of forwardness in this spirit of disaffection.'[2]

But in a few weeks, the aspect of affairs had become much more serious. In the camp at Bandon, Brigadier-General Coote discovered grave signs of disaffection among the soldiers, while two whole committees of United Irishmen were arrested at Cork. 'The fruits of our investigation,' wrote General Dalrymple, 'are bitter indeed: they only tend to prove the excess of the corruption of the people, civil and military. I should be sorry that lists of persons of this description were given to the world, for it would serve to prove the state of matters being far more dangerous than is at present believed. Our endeavours to counteract this business, however well directed and executed, are but very unavailing when opposed to the torrent of disaffection that is hourly increasing. . . . This is the result of much inquiry made by myself and others. . . . The evil increases with rapid strides, and is far from being confined to the wretched or needy.' On the 29th of May, two militia soldiers were executed with great solemnity for sedition. Five thousand men were present under arms, and the culprits, kneeling on their

[1] Dalrymple to Pelham, April 15, 20, 22, 1797.
[2] Camden to Portland, May 2, 1797.

coffins, acknowledged their guilt. But the evil was far from checked, and the investigation a few weeks later at Bandon, showed that an extensive plot had been formed among the inhabitants of that town to seduce the soldiers in the camp, murder General Coote and his officers, and produce a rising. About thirty soldiers and as many civilians were arrested, and Coote considered that many of the soldiers ought to suffer capitally, and that the inhabitants of the town were at the bottom of the business. General Loftus, however, wrote from Cork, 'I scarcely know an instance of a Catholic of consequence being the agitator of any disturbance here; the promoters of sedition either come from Dublin or the North, some originally from Manchester.'[1]

In May, reports were sent to the Castle of the appearance of the United Irish movement at Mallow,[2] and there were also alarming rumours of disloyalty among the Methodists. It appears, however, from an interesting letter of Dr. Croke, who presided over them, that the only foundation for these rumours, was the strong reluctance of some Methodist yeomen to go through military exercises on Sunday. Dr. Croke added, that his co-religionists were now a large body among the middle and poorer ranks of Protestants in Ireland, and that the communicants in the country churches were almost entirely composed of Methodists. They were attached to the Established Church, but thought themselves neglected and despised by it, and something should be done to conciliate them. In England, he said, a small part of the society had broken away from the Establishment, and appeared to have imbibed French principles.[3]

[1] Coote to Pelham, May 22, June 25, 27, 29, July 3; Dalrymple to Pelham, May 24; Pelham to Loftus, May 27; Loftus to Pelham, June 3; B. Shaw (Cork), May 29; Col. Massey (Cork), May 31, 1797.

[2] May 25.

[3] Dr. Croke, Limerick, May 23, 1797. The separation of

As usual, political agitation in Munster was soon followed by its attendant shadow—agrarian crime, organised intimidation, and frequent murder. Tithe grievances and oppression by middlemen were, in this province, especially flagrant, and they prepared the way for the agitators, and determined the character of the movement. The people were told that a successful rebellion would put an end to all such grievances, and that it would be immediately followed by a great confiscation and division of lands, and they pursued their ends by the usual Whiteboy methods.[1] In the September Assizes at Cork, the juries are said to have done their duty, and several persons were convicted, but many undoubted criminals were acquitted because witnesses either refused to appear or grossly prevaricated,[2] and almost immediately after, a large area around Lismore and Boyle became the scene of Defender outrages. There was a general conspiracy to refuse tithes. The houghing of cattle and the burning of corn became common. Every night marauding

the Wesleyan Methodists in Ireland from the Church did not take place till 1808 or 1809, about fifteen years after a similar separation had taken place in England. See a letter from Alexander Knox to Hannah More, Knox's *Remains*, iv. 231–233, and also Crookshank's *Hist. of Methodism in Ireland*, ii. 110.

[1] Higgins, having gone down to Cork to receive some rents, wrote to the Government describing the war against tithes, the houghing of cattle, and the promises that were held out of a division of land among the rebels He adds: 'I made the most strict inquiry, if there existed any colourable cause for complaint among the poor as to tithe-gathering, and it appeared that the incumbent or owner of tithes lets them at the highest value to a tithe farmer. The farmer lets to the tithe proctor, and each of them must receive an increased profit. This, with the enormous acreable rent charged for potato ground to the lowest order of the peasantry by the middlemen, is the occasion of great discontent, and renders the peasantry ready instruments in the hands of wicked and designing men.' (F. H., Oct. 15, 1797.)

[2] Robert Day (Cork), Sept. 29, 1797.

parties traversed the country, and in a few weeks at least five atrocious murders were committed.[1] Lord Shannon, the chief resident landlord in the county of Cork, wrote to the Government: 'I am persuaded that there are few, if any, of the lower orders in this country who have not taken the United Irish oath, and, though not over-scrupulous about breaking every other solemn tie, they are faithful to that, as the most immediate and barbarous assassination is the certain consequence of even the least suspicion of having violated it; shocking instances of which have happened in parts of the county of Waterford, bordering on the county of Cork. By the prevailing system of terror, resident gentlemen of property have lost the influence they formerly had over the lower order of peasantry, and I can say from my own observation, that men who are dependent on me, and frequently had resorted to me for kindnesses, are now visibly terrified at being seen alone with me, lest they may incur suspicion and its consequences. It has been represented to me, that large bodies of horse have been seen parading at night in sequestered parts, well mounted and armed, the main body preceded by an advanced, and followed by a rear guard. . . . I am satisfied the whole country is united in one league, and devoted to the mandates of committees, which I understand sit at Cork and the different baronies of the county. . . . All this seems to me, to lead clearly to rebellion and a general rising on the first opportunity that offers.'[2]

This picture appeared to Camden in no way exaggerated. One of his confidential letters to Portland,

[1] Sir R. Musgrave (Lismore), Oct. 6, Nov. 12; General Loftus to Pelham, Oct. 26; Lord Mountcashell (near Boyle), Nov. 11. Several other documents illustrating the outrages will be found in the I.S.P.O., Sept., Oct., Nov. 1797. Among them are many requests for troops.

[2] Lord Shannon (Castle Martyr), Nov. 9, 1797.

written in November, paints in vivid colours the horrors of the scene. 'It is melancholy,' he wrote, 'to observe how much accustomed the mind becomes to histories of outrage and of cruelty, and it is for that reason only that I can account for my despatches to your grace not being filled with the dreadful information I every day receive of the murders of magistrates, the assassination of informers and yeomen, and the conspiracies against persons of rank, consequence, and station. . . . I have further been informed of a conspiracy to assassinate Lord Shannon and Lord Boyle; and it is a melancholy observation to make to your grace, that where these noblemen reside, and in a neighbourhood extremely well inhabited by gentlemen, there are and have been more signs of disturbance than in almost any part of the kingdom. The pretence of the county of Cork is the exorbitancy of tithes, and the cattle are houghed and the corn burnt of all those who shall pay them, or who shall draw the corn to the barns of the rector. This pretence is, however, quickly followed by notices to pay no rent. Those persons who have entered into the yeomanry corps are deserted as tradesmen, and there is a combination, which is most alarming, against all those who attempt to support the King and the Constitution. Information was given of some persons in the county of Waterford who were concerned in these transactions, and those miscreants who suspected the informer, not content with murdering the informer himself, murdered his wife and daughter; and that nothing alive should be left in the house, the dog that belonged to the family was killed also.' 'As long as the war lasts, I fear I cannot promise your grace any settled tranquillity in Ireland; and even when it shall cease, the seeds of discontent have been so industriously sown, the method of communicating real or supposed grievances is so extensively established, that it will be

long before the kingdom regains its former tranquillity; and if the French shall be able to effect a landing, I apprehend much blood will be shed and many atrocities committed.'[1]

Connaught of all the four provinces was by far the most peaceful, but there, too, the traces of the agitators may be found. Around Sligo, the process of swearing in United Irishmen was actively going on, and outrages were beginning, though they appear to have been much less serious and frequent than in the three other provinces.[2] From Ennis, in Clare, a magistrate wrote that he had believed that his county had escaped the contagion, but had just discovered that about 100 persons, chiefly young men, shepherds, and servants, had in June been sworn in by some northern emigrants.[3] From Newport, in the county of Mayo, another magistrate reported that some men from the North had lately appeared in the county trying to swear in United Irishmen, but they had been detected and arrested. 'I am happy,' adds the writer, 'to have it in my power to observe that this part of the country is in the most peaceable condition, and likely to continue so,' and this appeared to him to be the first attempt to seduce the people of that district from their loyalty.[4] Lord Altamount, who watched so wisely and so humanely over the state of his great property around Westport, writes in October: 'All is perfectly quiet here now, but I am sorry to know there is a great deal of bad disposition around me—I know it from those from whom secrets are not concealed—and that those ill intentions are not confined to the lower classes.' At all times, he said, Mayo and Connemara were so wild and uncivilised that they were the asylum of deserters, robbers, and

[1] Camden to Portland, Nov. 15, 1797.

[2] O. Wynne, May 17; T. Soden, May 24, 1797.

[3] H. Sankey, Oct. 5, 1797.

[4] Mr. O'Donnell, May 21, 1797.

murderers from the whole kingdom; but his special subject of anxiety was the great mass of immigrants from the North, whose state was now almost desperate. Most of them were supported by public or private charity, but he feared they would soon be necessarily driven to plunder.[1]

It would be difficult to conceive a more dreary or a more ignoble picture than Ireland at this time presented. The Parliament had lost almost every quality of a representative body; the Government was at once bigoted and corrupt, and steadily opposed to the most moderate and most legitimate reforms; and in three provinces almost every county was filled with knots of conspirators and incendiaries, who were trying to bring down on their country a foreign invasion, and were stirring up the people to rebellion and to crime. A few of them were men of genuine enthusiasm, and real, though certainly not extraordinary, talent; but the great majority were mere demagogues, adventurers, and criminals—such men as in days of anarchy and revolution ever rise to the surface—and scarcely one of them had the smallest right or title to speak as the representative of the nation. In the mean time, the country as a whole presented the most melancholy of all spectacles, that of general, rapid, and profound demoralisation. Religious animosities were steadily increasing. The old ties of reverence and affection, which, in spite of many unhappy circumstances, had bound the poor to the rich, were giving way. Crimes were multiplying, and they were constantly assuming a character of savage ferocity, while organised outrage was encountered by a military repression which often exceeded the limits of the law, led to horrible abuses, and was fast demoralising the forces that were employed in it. It was

[1] Lord Altamount, Oct. 1797.

evident that there was no sentiment in the great mass of the poorer Catholics that was sufficiently powerful to be turned into a serious political movement, or to bring armed forces into the field, though there was a vague dislike to the English race and name, which was now being steadily fanned. But in 1797, as in later periods, political agitators found it necessary for their purposes to appeal to other than political motives—to agrarian grievances and agrarian cupidity; to religious passions; to the discontent produced by the pressure of poverty in a population which was very poor; to the panic which skilful falsehood could easily create in a population which was very ignorant. All these engines were systematically, unscrupulously, and successfully employed, and what in one sphere was politics, in another soon turned into ordinary crime. Camden noticed in June, that the first leaders of the conspiracy seemed to have in some degree lost their ascendency, and that 'a set of lower mechanics' had 'the greatest sway.' 'The plan of acting under an oath of secrecy,' he added, 'induces in itself such necessary caution, and the regular system of committees is so detailed, that it becomes extremely easy to act upon it,'[1] and the intervention of the leaders was in consequence little needed. McNally noticed that the plan of committees and 'splits'[2] was carrying the wish for French invasion, the military spirit, and the hatred of England through all the common people.[3]

In the first months of 1797, an insurrection in the North of Ireland was frequently expected, and there was a fierce dissension on the subject among the leaders of the conspiracy; but in the summer, the party which

[1] Camden to Portland, June 17, 1797.

[2] That is, as I have already explained, dividing every committee into two when it attained the number of thirty-six members.

[3] J. W., Oct. 2, 1797.

desired to postpone the revolt till the arrival of the French, obtained a decisive ascendency, and orders to avoid all provocation to military action were issued, which probably contributed something to the lull in Ulster.[1] New and brilliant hopes of foreign assistance had by this time arisen, and the negotiation with France, which had been for some months suspended, was again active. In April, a Catholic attorney named Edward Lewins, who had been originally intended for the priesthood, and educated in a French seminary, and who was therefore a complete master of the French language, was sent, by the executive of the United Irishmen, to Hamburg, to renew with Reinhard the negotiation which in the previous year Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor had begun. For greater security he was entrusted with no letter accrediting him to the French Minister, but he brought a letter and a gown from Lady Edward Fitzgerald to a female relation who was living at Hamburg, and having thus established his connection with the family, he authenticated his mission by relating the substance of letters and private conversations that had passed between Reinhard and Lord Edward. He represented Ireland as fully prepared for insurrection, and some parts even of England as pervaded by secret societies, and he was instructed to ask from France armed assistance, and a promise that she would make no peace with England till the 'British troops had been withdrawn from Ireland, and the people left at full liberty to declare whether they wished to continue the connection with England or not.' He was also directed to endeavour to obtain a loan of 500,000*l.* and a supply of arms from Spain, and an alliance with the newly formed Batavian Republic.[2]

[1] See a letter from Reinhard, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 278; also J. W., Jan. 24, June 10, 1797.

[2] Reinhard to De la Croix, 25, 30 floréal, an 5 (May 14, 19

Lewins appears from his own letters, and from the testimony of Tone, to have been a man of real capacity, disinterestedness, and sincerity, and to have conducted his mission with skill and with some measure of success. He remained nearly two months at Hamburg, and succeeded, through the medium of a Spanish naval officer, who had been sent on a diplomatic mission to that town, in opening a negotiation with Spain,[1] while communicating frequently with Reinhard, who forwarded copies of his papers to Hoche. When he left Ireland, he hoped to attain his objects by a brief, and not very dangerous, secret negotiation with the French Minister in a neutral town,[2] but he soon found out that a longer and more perilous mission was before him. Hoche, who was burning to renew the abortive enterprise of the preceding December, summoned him to the Rhine, and he went there in company with Tone.[3] He learnt that Hoche had already sent one of his adjutant-generals to Paris, to press the Executive Directory and Minister of Marine; that he had forwarded to them all the necessary papers, including those which had been drawn up by Lewins; and that he had received from them a very

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1797). (French Foreign Office.) Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 407–409.

[1] Wolfe Tone, ii. 408.

[2] The report of the Committee of Secrecy in 1798 gives in general a very true account of Lewins' mission, but it is mistaken in supposing that he was originally intended to be a resident Irish Minister at Paris. Lewins himself (under his assumed name of Thompson) wrote a full account of his mission, 13 fructidor. an 6 (Aug. 30, 1797), which is at the French Foreign Office, and which I have followed.

[3] There is here a curious though not important discrepancy of evidence. Wolfe Tone, in his journal, says that they met Hoche on June 21 at Coblentz. He makes no mention of having been at Frankfort, and it is, I think, impossible from his diary that he can have been there. Lewins, in his letter to the French Minister (13 fructidor, an 6), says that he went to Frankfort to meet Hoche, and the same statement is made in the report of the Committee of Secrecy.

encouraging reply, and a distinct assurance that France 'would make no peace with England, wherein the interests of Ireland should not be fully discussed, agreeably to the wishes of the people of that country.' He learnt also the important fact, that preparations were now making in Holland for a great expedition against England, under the command of General Daendels and Admiral de Winter, and that its destination was likely to be Ireland. Hoche himself, accompanied by the two Irishmen, went in June to the Hague to assist in organising it.

It was intended, at first, to be a joint French and Dutch expedition, but the Dutch Government placed obstacles in the way of French co-operation and appears to have been extremely anxious that the new Batavian Republic should by its unassisted efforts strike a blow which would establish its reputation throughout Europe. Hoche, with great magnanimity, withdrew his claim to participate in the expedition, and it was finally determined that it should be purely Dutch, but that it should be speedily followed and supported by a second expedition, which was preparing at Brest. At the end of June a powerful Dutch fleet of twenty-five ships of the line and frigates, with transports carrying nearly 14,000 soldiers, was collected at the Texel. It was arranged that Tone should accompany it. Hoche promised to send him his instructions for carrying on the war in La Vendée, which appeared to the French general the exact model to be followed in Ireland, and he expressed his belief that a French army would reach the Irish coast in about a fortnight after the arrival of the Dutch. In the first week of July, Tone and Lewins left the Hague, the first proceeding to the Texel and the latter to Paris.[1]

[1] The most detailed account of all this is in Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 409–416.

The French Government in the mean time sent a Swede of the name of Jagerhorn to England, with instructions to proceed to Ireland to communicate the intentions of the French Government; to obtain an assurance that Lewins possessed the full powers from the United Irishmen which he claimed, and also to form a sober and unprejudiced estimate of the situation in Ireland. Jagerhorn failed in procuring a passport to Ireland, but he succeeded in sending a companion there, and he had himself an interview with Lord Edward Fitzgerald in London. His report to the French Government was very satisfactory as to the disposition of the Irish people in favour of rebellion, but not equally so as to the means at their disposal. About 100,000 persons, he believed, had been enrolled in the conspiracy, and almost the whole nation sympathised with it; but he doubted whether there were more than from 12,000 to 15,000 men who had any arms, and he believed that without artillery and competent officers, and in the presence of a garrison of some 40,000 men, no successful insurrection was possible except by the assistance of the French.[1]

The Irish had meanwhile resolved to send a second messenger to stimulate the efforts of the French. They selected for that purpose McNevin, a Catholic physician, and one of the ablest members of the United Irish Executive. He left Ireland for Hamburg on June 27, and on his arrival drew up for the Directory a very elaborate memoir on the state of Ireland, and on the means of invading it. He recommended Oyster Haven as the best point for a landing in the South, and Lough Swilly in the North, and gave many military and topographical details of much value; but he urged especially, that it was only in the North and North-west of the island that

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 277, 286–288.

the French could expect really efficacious co-operation from the United Irishmen. In Ulster, he said, not less than 150,000 men were enrolled, and a great part of them were so organised that they could become serious soldiers. Outside Ulster the organisation had spread, and was spreading rapidly; but arms were still greatly wanting. Bandon, however, was now another Belfast; Cork, Tipperary, Limerick, Galway, Roscommon, Meath and West Meath, Kildare, the King's County, and the city of Dublin were all largely organised. 'Even in those places where the United Irish system is not entirely adopted, the co-operation of the poor and middle classes may be counted on. Their hatred of the English despotism, and the vexations they endure from their lords, cause the most ignorant among them to act in the same sense as the most enlightened republicans. The Catholic priests are no longer alarmed at the calumnies diffused about the irreligion of the French; they have adopted the principles of the people on whom they depend; they are in general good republicans; they have done good service by propagating with a discreet zeal the system of union, and they have persuaded the people to take the oath [of allegiance] imposed on them by force, without in any respect renouncing their principles and their projects.'

The memoir then proceeds to state that very lately the Prince of Wales, who was closely connected with three of the chiefs of the Opposition, sent over a confidential agent in hopes of creating a movement for making him Lord Lieutenant, on the understanding that he would support the emancipation of the Catholics, parliamentary reform, the abolition of the coercive legislation of the last three years, and a complete change of men and things; but the leaders of the Opposition refused to take part in this scheme. McNevin attributes

their refusal to their belief that a French invasion was probable, though they had no direct information on the subject. Both the Prince of Wales, he said, and Lord Moira, were moving heaven and earth to change the existing system in Ireland, and to content the people in order to withdraw them from French influence. They had, however, met with no response. The people were resolved to aim at independence and a republican Government, and, in the event of an invasion, the bulk of the militia would undoubtedly join the French. The immediate measure which would act most powerfully on the situation, would be a declaration on the part of France, that she would make no peace with the English Government which did not contain a provision for the independence of Ireland.[1]

This last sentence probably refers to the negotiations for peace which had just begun at Lille; and in order to understand the situation, it will be necessary for us again to cast a rapid glance over continental affairs. We have seen that in August 1796, Spain had been forced into an alliance with France, and two months later into a war with England, and French statesmen then imagined that, having command of the Dutch and Spanish navies as well as of their own, they would at last be able to contend on equal if not superior terms with England upon the sea. Wolfe Tone hoped that the Spanish fleet would arrive in time to give an overwhelming strength to the expedition to Bantry Bay;

[1] F.F.O. The greater part of this memoir will be found in the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 295–301, but the passage relating to the Prince of Wales is omitted. It appears to be perfectly true that the Prince of Wales in the beginning of 1797 had wished to be Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, with the object of pacifying Ireland by concessions, and had made a proposition to that effect to the Government. See Lord Colchester's *Diary and Correspondence*, i. 94; Plowden, ii. 589 590; Buckingham's *Court and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 366.

but it was miserably equipped and manned,[1] and it lingered long in the Mediterranean. Its appearance there, in alliance with the French, obliged Admiral Jervis to quit that sea, and led to the recovery of Corsica by the French, and to the establishment of peace between France and Naples. At last, on February 14, 1797, Jervis attacked and totally defeated the Spaniards off Cape St. Vincent. The English were far inferior to the enemy in the number of their ships and guns, but the Spanish crews consisted chiefly of hastily draughted landsmen, who were almost helpless in a naval battle; the victory was won with less loss and less resistance than, perhaps, any other of equal importance during the war, and from this time the Spanish navy ceased to be a serious danger. Cadiz was afterwards bombarded. A few prizes were captured, and the war was carried on with various results against the colonies of Spain. Trinidad, one of the richest of her West Indian isles, was captured in February, but an attack upon Porto Rico in April, and an attack upon Teneriffe in July, were both repelled. The last expedition is memorable as the one great failure of Nelson, and it was on this occasion that he lost his right arm.

The career of victory which Buonaparte had pursued in Italy in 1796 was still unbroken. In February 1797, Mantua, the strongest Austrian fortress, surrendered, and the Pope was compelled to sign a peace, ceding not only Avignon and the Venaisin, but also Bologna, Ferrara, and the Romagna, placing Ancona in French hands till the close of the war, and paying a large sum to the conqueror. Buonaparte then turned his undivided forces against the Archduke Charles; he drove him within a few days' march of Vienna, and he extorted in April the preliminaries of a peace at Leoben.

[1] See James's *Naval History*, ii. 47.

The definitive Peace of Campo Formio was not signed until October, and it contained some important articles which were not in the preliminaries, but the preliminaries of Leoben put an end to the war and established the complete continental ascendency of France. Austria now formally acquiesced in the incorporation into the French Republic, of Belgium and Savoy. She renounced all her Italian possessions beyond the Oglio, and acknowledged the new Cis-Alpine Republic, but she stipulated that she should be indemnified by the plunder of the neutral Republic of Venice. At the definitive treaty of peace this plunder was consummated by a partition as complete and as iniquitous as that of Poland. The Italian territory of Venice passed to Austria; the Greek islands and the Albanian possessions that had belonged to her passed to France, and thus, after an existence of more than 1,400 years, one of the oldest and most glorious of European States vanished from the world.

The preliminaries of Leoben were signed in opposition to the wishes of the Archduke Charles. They left England without any continental ally except Portugal, but they at the same time took away one of her chief reasons for continuing the war. The negotiations of 1796 had broken off principally on the demand of the English for the restoration of the Austrian Netherlands to the Emperor; but though the expulsion of the French from that territory was of vital importance to England, it had now become plainly impracticable. Pitt, who still ardently desired peace, and who was especially alarmed at the financial aspects of the war, resolved to make another attempt, and, contrary to the wish both of the King and of Lord Grenville, an overture was made to De la Croix, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was accepted, though in very ungracious terms, and three French Ministers Plenipo-

tentiary were appointed to meet Lord Malmesbury at Lille. They were Le Tourneur, who had recently left the Directory, the Admiral Pléville le Peley, and Maret, whose skill in negotiation, and whose anxiety to avert the war in 1793, we have already seen. The first conference took place on July 6.

It is unnecessary to relate in minute detail the negotiations that followed. On the English side the extreme desire of Pitt to make peace is beyond reasonable doubt. Canning, who was now his closest confidant, wrote a melancholy private letter to Ellis, who was attached to Lord Malmesbury's embassy, in which he disclosed the situation with perfect frankness. 'Were I writing to you,' he said, 'on December 13 last, instead of the present July 13, could I have thought with patience of renunciation and restitution unaccompanied by cessions to balance and compensate them? But we cannot and must not disguise our situation from ourselves. If peace is to be had, we must have it. I firmly believe that we must, and it is a belief that strengthens every day. When Windham says we must not, I ask him, "Can we have war?" It is out of the question, we have not the means; we have not what is of all means the most essential, the *mind*. If we are not at peace, we shall be at nothing. . . . For my part, I adjourn my objects of honour and happiness for this country, beyond the grave of our military and political consequence which you are now digging at Lille. I believe in our resurrection, and find my only comfort in it. . . . We can break off upon nothing but what will rouse us from sleep and stupidity into a new life and action. . . . We are now soulless and spiritless.'[1]

How strangely imperfect is all political prescience!

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 397, 398.

Who could have imagined from such a picture, that England was still destined to struggle on through no less than eighteen years of desperate warfare, to a final triumph? Or, looking backwards, who could have imagined when Pitt reluctantly engaged in 1793, with the support of almost all Europe, in a conflict with a country which seemed utterly disorganised by revolution, that the great and haughty minister of England would be compelled within four years, and in almost absolute isolation, to sue for a peace not less really disadvantageous and scarcely less humiliating to England, than that of 1783? Pitt was prepared to acknowledge Belgium to be a French province, and Holland a French vassal; to acknowledge all the French conquests in Germany and Italy; to restore to France, without compensation, all the colonial possessions which England had taken from her during the war. He stipulated only that she should retain the Cape of Good Hope and Trinidad; that she should retain Ceylon and Cochin, in exchange for the restoration of Negapatnam on the coast of Tanjore; that the Prince of Orange should be indemnified for his private property; and that Portugal, the last ally of England, should be included in the peace.

If the French Directory had accepted peace on these terms, they would have closed the wars of the Revolution by placing France in a prouder position than she had ever reached during the monarchy. Having baffled and plundered all their enemies on the Continent, they would have compelled their old rival, who was still invincible on the sea, to acknowledge herself vanquished in the struggle of centuries. From generation to generation, it had been a main object of English foreign policy to maintain the balance of power in Europe, and above all to preserve Belgium and Holland—the two countries that were most essen-

tial to English security—free from French aggrandisement. It was left to the son of the great Lord Chatham, to the minister whose genius had raised England, after the humiliating peace of 1783, to an almost unexampled height of prosperity and power, to accept and even to solicit a peace, leaving France supreme in Europe, the absolute mistress of Belgium, the virtual mistress of Holland. But Pitt, having taken his resolution, did not flinch, and he assured Lord Malmesbury that 'he would stifle every feeling of pride to the utmost, to produce the desired result.'[1]

It is not difficult to see the overwhelming force of the reasons that impelled him. The enormous increase of expenditure and debt threatened England with ruin, and would certainly, if not speedily checked, cripple her for generations. The Bank of England had been obliged to stop cash payments. The three per cents in May sank to forty-eight, the lowest point they had ever touched. In Ireland, the continuance of the war would almost certainly lead to prolonged and ruinous anarchy, and probably to the dangers and horrors of a great rebellion. Every ally of England, except Portugal, had dropped away, and some of them were in arms against her. It was impossible, by the most lavish subsidies, any longer to resist France on the Continent, or to drive her within her ancient limits, and the security of England herself from invasion depended on the constant superiority of her navy to the united navies of France, Spain, and Holland. The war was unpopular; the nation was discouraged, and the mutiny of the Nore had disclosed the new and terrible danger of disaffection in the fleet.

It soon, however, appeared that the chances of obtaining peace were very small. Of the five members

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 369.

of the Directory, three were evidently opposed to it, and two at least of the French Commissioners were fully prepared to carry out their views. The French at once demanded the relinquishment by the King of England of his old title of King of France, the restoration of the ships that had been taken at Toulon, and an equivalent for those which had been destroyed; and they raised a question about a mortgage, which they erroneously imagined to be held by England on the Netherlands for money granted to the Emperor. But discussion had not proceeded far on these points, before a new demand was made, which appeared absolutely to close the door to peace. It was, that England should immediately, and as a preliminary to all negotiation, restore everything she had conquered, not only from France, but also from the Batavian Republic and from Spain.

Lord Malmesbury, unwilling at once to break off the conference, asked for further explanations and instructions, and he was confirmed in this course by a very strange and characteristic incident. On July 14, an English gentleman, who had been long residing at Lille, called on the Secretary of the Legation, and showed him a note from M. Pein, who was an intimate friend of his own, and a near relation of Maret. It contained these somewhat enigmatical words: 'It would perhaps be necessary, in order to press on the negotiation, that Lord Malmesbury should have the means of coming to an understanding, and preparing materials with the person who is in truth the only one in a position to conduct the affair. In that case it would be possible to procure for Lord Malmesbury an intermediary who has the entire confidence of the person in question, and who, like that person, has no other end than the interest of all, and an arrangement equally suitable to both parties.' The gentleman then pro-

ceeded to explain, that Pein was in the full confidence of Maret, and that this overture was made with the authorisation of Maret. In consequence of this communication, Ellis had a secret interview with Pein, who fully confirmed what had been said, and added that Maret's opinions on all political subjects were very different from those of the other plenipotentiaries; that he had been appointed by his intimate friend Barthélemy, who, with Carnot, was resolved, if possible, to gratify the ardent desire of the French nation for peace; that the other three Directors were of other sentiments, but that if the negotiation was prolonged and prudently conducted, they must in the end give way.

A change of ministers in France, which happened within the next few days, appeared slightly to improve the prospect. De la Croix, who had shown himself violent and impracticable, and personally hostile to Lord Malmesbury, was replaced, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, by Talleyrand; and Pléville le Peley was made Minister of Marine, thus reducing the French Plenipotentiaries at Lille to two, one of whom seemed sincerely anxious for peace. It was reported from Paris, that the Government there was extremely unstable, that a large and increasing party in the legislative councils were hostile to the Directory, and that another revolution was very probable, and Malmesbury justly said that the chances of peace depended much more on what took place at Paris, than on what took place at Lille.

A secret understanding between Lord Malmesbury and Maret was speedily formed. It was chiefly arranged between Ellis and Pein, and the latter brought an assurance that Maret utterly disapproved of the recent demands of the Directory. Signs were devised by which Maret could communicate with Malmesbury at

the conference, without being suspected by his own colleague. At the request of Maret, the reply of the English Cabinet to the French demand was privately submitted to him, before it was presented, and at his suggestion one of its arguments was strengthened. A confidential letter, in which Barthélemy expressed to Maret his deep sense of the absolute necessity of peace; of the absurdity of the recent demands; of the folly and instability that surrounded him, and of the supreme importance of gaining time, was duly read to the English Minister. The delay now came from the French side, and it was explained that it was owing to the fact that the French were putting pressure on their allies, in order to compel them to acquiesce in cessions to the English. This explanation was given, not by Maret, but by Le Tourneur, who, though he was not in the secret of his colleague, appears at this time, and during the remainder of the negotiation, to have been sincerely desirous of peace. It was added, that on the side of Spain the French found little difficulty, but that the Batavian Republic was obstinately opposed to cessions. In England, only Pitt, Grenville, and Canning were aware of the strange by-play that was going on, and two distinct series of despatches were written by Lord Malmesbury, one of which was intended to be laid before the Cabinet, while the other was intended only for the three ministers.

The English negotiators doubted the sincerity of the overtures that were made to them, and the reality of the causes of delay that were assigned, but it was plain that the official propositions of the Directory must destroy all hopes of peace. It was probable, or at least possible, that Maret and Talleyrand, and the two members of the Directory, or at least some of them, were sincere in wishing for peace, and if the pressure of French public opinion or of the legislative councils, or

the influence of Talleyrand, or any of the numerous political intrigues that were agitating Paris, displaced the majority in the Directory, and gave a casting vote to the peace party, the whole aspect of affairs might change. Pitt desired above all things peace, if it could be accompanied by the retention of such a portion of the many conquests of England as would in some degree save the dignity of a nation which had been everywhere triumphant upon the sea, and in some degree compensate by its commercial advantages for the ruinous sacrifices that had been made. If, however, such a peace could not be obtained, he desired that the French should make requisitions so manifestly unreasonable that the necessity for carrying on the war should be apparent to every Englishman.[1] On the whole, the situation seemed hopeful, though not sufficiently so to inspire confidence. 'Shall we be sent back or not, this time?' wrote Ellis. 'Seriously, the Directory is so strange a body, and this so strange a nation, that I have my doubts, and yet this letter surely contains some reasonable grounds for hope.' 'I am not without my apprehensions,' wrote Malmesbury, 'that you infer too much from what we transmit to you; that you get too sanguine, or at least sanguine too soon. . . . Pray check this too eager hope. It is not to be justified. We may and probably shall have peace, but not soon, not on our own terms (I mean original terms), and it will be a work of labour and altercation to obtain some not very different from them.'[2]

There are few more curious pages in diplomatic history than the account in Lord Malmesbury's papers of these proceedings. Ellis and Pein continued to have frequent conferences, in which the affairs of the two nations seem to have been discussed with complete ap-

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 430. [2] Ibid. iii. 434, 464.

parent frankness, and Malmesbury and his French colleagues were soon on the most cordial terms, and had more than one strangely undiplomatic conversation in their boxes in the theatre. But suddenly, like a thunderclap, the news broke upon the English Plenipotentiary, that on August 10 the Portuguese Minister at Paris had signed a separate peace for Portugal, and that one of its articles, in direct defiance of the English treaty of 1703, forbade the English fleet to receive supplies in Portugal, and excluded during the war all but a limited number of English vessels from the Portuguese ports. The Court of Lisbon, it is true, ultimately refused to ratify this treaty, but from the time it was signed, the hopes of peace began to dwindle. Combined with the negotiations which were rapidly pressing on for a definitive peace with the Emperor, and with the preparations that were known to be making at the Texel, the Portuguese treaty fully confirmed Lord Grenville in his distrust of French diplomacy. 'The clandestine and precipitate manner,' he wrote, 'in which the business has been conducted, affords indisputable proofs of the total absence of a sincere and candid disposition for peace on the part of his Majesty's enemies;' and he drew up an official note about the proceedings of the Directory, in a strain which was so haughty, and so manifestly calculated to break off the negotiation, that Malmesbury took the very grave step of disobeying his instructions, and not presenting it.[1] Malmesbury was supported by Pitt, who still wished to negotiate, and still hoped for peace, and who, though startled and irritated by the Portuguese treaty, refused to look upon it as an insuperable obstacle. 'I think it,' he wrote, 'a natural, though an unworthy game, in those we are treating with; but I do not much expect that, if other

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 489, 490, 497.

points could be settled, this would stand in the way of peace.'[1]

At the beginning of the negotiation, Malmesbury had received a message which purported to come from Barras, one of the majority in the Directory, offering peace in return for a bribe of 500,000*l.*; but Malmesbury, believing the offer to be either unauthorised by Barras, or a trap laid by the Directory, took no notice of it. In the middle of August, a new message was brought to him by an American, who stated that the Portuguese peace had been purchased by a gift of ten or twelve millions of livres to the Directors, and that fifteen millions of livres, distributed between Rewbell and Barras, would secure a similar peace for England. He appears to have had no credentials, and nothing resulted from the overture. Extreme corruption, however, in French Government circles was one of the elements to be calculated on, and the English Ministers had some evidence that Barthélemy, and convincing evidence that Talleyrand, was at this time stockjobbing largely in the English funds.[2]

The hopes of peace were soon shattered by the *coup d'état* of the 18th fructidor,[3] when the Triumvirate, who formed the majority of the Directory, brought a great body of troops into Paris, surrounded and dispersed the two legislative councils, and, on the pretext of a royalist plot, arrested a multitude of members who were opposed to them, and ordered the immediate imprisonment of their two colleagues. Carnot succeeded in escaping, and, at last, made his way to Geneva, but Barthélemy was arrested, and, next day, the triumvirs issued a law

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 491. That Pitt approved of Malmesbury's disobedience, I infer from the full approval of that disobedience expressed by Canning, who was at this time Pitt's mouthpiece. (Ibid. p. 520.)

[2] Ibid. pp. 439, 453, 520.

[3] Sept. 4.

of proscription, which was sanctioned by the partisan remnant of the legislative councils, and which condemned Barthélemy and Carnot, forty-two members of one legislative council, and eleven members of the other, to a perpetual banishment to Cayenne, or to the pestilential swamps of Guiana. The proprietors and editors of forty-two journals, and about 180 priests, were, soon after, condemned to the same fate. A few, like Carnot, succeeded in concealing themselves, but in general the savage sentence was savagely executed, and a majority of the prisoners perished by hardship or pestilence. Barthélemy escaped from Guiana, in an American vessel, and took refuge in England.

It was the strong opinion of Malmesbury and Canning, on the one side, and of Maret and Talleyrand, on the other, that if this revolution had not taken place, the majority in the Directory would have been compelled by the legislative councils, and by the pressure of French public opinion, to consent to a peace on the lines which England had proposed. The 18th fructidor, however, at once destroyed the influence of the Moderate party. The French legation at Lille was recalled, and replaced by two violent Jacobins, with peremptory instructions. They arrived at Lille on September 13, and almost immediately after, they demanded whether Malmesbury had power to consent to 'a general restitution of every possession remaining in his Majesty's hands, not only belonging to them, but to their allies,' as a preliminary to any further negotiation; and they added, that when this had been accomplished, there were still many articles to be proposed. The reply being naturally in the negative, Lord Malmesbury was, on September 16, ordered, within twenty-four hours, to quit France.[1]

It is curious to observe, how long it was before the

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 561–569, 576.

last faint gleam of hope disappeared, and all prospect of negotiation was abandoned. Immediately on hearing of the new revolution, Pitt wrote to Malmesbury, expressing his unaltered determination to continue the negotiation, and his belief that it was still possible to attain a peace;[1] and even after Lord Malmesbury had been ignominiously sent back to London, he exchanged, by the wish of the Government, two or three notes with the French Plenipotentiaries, who were still at Lille, in hopes of finding some possible basis for resuming the negotiations. Rewbell and Barras, or, perhaps, Barras alone, had made another overture, promising peace, in return for a large bribe. In a letter to the King, dated September 22, Pitt stated that 'he had received communications from a person (who produces as strong proofs as can, in the nature of the case, be given, of the authenticity of his mission), stating that, notwithstanding what had passed at Lille, the Directory will still agree to an immediate peace, giving to this country both the Cape and Ceylon, on condition of their receiving a large sum of money for their own use. The sum named is 1,200,000*l.* for Ceylon, or 2,000,000*l.* for both,' and Pitt strongly recommended that the proposal should be encouraged, and was even sanguine about its success.[2] Whether it was ever seriously intended, whether Barras found himself unable to carry his colleagues with him, or whether, as Lord Malmesbury believed, the whole proposal was merely a stockjobbing device, must always be doubtful. A French note of September 25, distinctly stated, that a resumption of the negotiations would only be permitted, if the English

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, p. 554.

[2] There appear to have been two distinct negotiations, one coming from Talleyrand, and the other from one or more of the Directors. Compare Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii., appendix, vii.–ix.; *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 580–584.

absolutely submitted to the French demand for the restitution of all the English conquests,[1] and from this time, all hope of peace disappeared.

It was an assertion of Lord Clare, that the 'Irish Directory had three accredited ministers, resident at Lille, during the late negotiations for peace, to counteract the King's minister, Lord Malmesbury.'[2] This statement is unsupported by any evidence, and it is contradicted by Wolfe Tone, but Tone adds that Lewins was actively employed in Luxemburg and elsewhere, with that object,[3] and Lewins, himself, has mentioned that, about this time, he received, at Paris, formal assurances from the French Government, that they would make no peace, without stipulating for Irish independence.[4] The conferences at Lille sufficiently show the worthlessness of such assurances. Ireland, as far as is known, was never, from first to last, even mentioned in them, and the lesson derived from this silence is made much stronger, by a document which has not yet passed into history. It will be remembered, that the French demand for the restitution of all English conquests, made during the war, was put forward as a mere preliminary to negotiation, and Maret can-

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 587, 588. There was a later note of Oct. 1, intended to throw the blame of the rupture on the English, but it in no degree modified the French terms. (Pp. 588, 589.)

[2] *Debate in the House of Peers, Feb.* 19, 1798, p. 120. 'Not a word immediately from Napper Tandy as yet, but a person whom J. Tandy will not name, but whom he describes as in the confidence of Government, has assured him, there is an account at the Castle that he is now at Lisle with Tone and others, and that they have been protracting peace between Great Britain and France.' (J. W., Aug. 11, 1797.) Higgins also stated that McNevin, Tone, and Tandy were at Lille during the negotiation. (F. H., Oct. 24, 1797.)

[3] *Memoirs*, ii. 469.

[4] Memoir of Thompson (Lewins) to the French Government, 26 primaire, an 8. (F.F.O.)

didly told Malmesbury, that the original instructions, which were drawn up for the legation, by De la Croix, were so extravagant, that they did not venture to bring them forward.[1] They may be found in the French Foreign Office,[2] and they amply justify the description. In addition to the demands which have been mentioned, the French plenipotentiaries were to insist on the surrender of Jersey and Guernsey; on the restoration of Canada, and the Newfoundland fishery; on the cession of Gibraltar to Spain, and they were even to endeavour to obtain the restoration of those great Indian dominions which had been wrested from France in 1754. But this document, which enumerated, in the most extravagant form, all that France hoped to extort from a humiliated England, keeps an absolute silence about Ireland and Irish independence. What clearer proof could there be that Ireland was, in truth, but a pawn in the game; that in endeavouring to convulse her with civil war, the French Government looked to no other object, than the temporary embarrassment of the enemy; that even if a French invasion had proved successful, Ireland would probably, as Grattan warned his countrymen, have been abandoned at the peace, in compensation for some real object of French ambition?

It would not have been altogether the first experience of the kind. In 1728, Marshal Broglie had obtained permission to recruit for the French service in Ireland, and great numbers of Irishmen had passed under the French flag. A melancholy and striking memoir, which was presented to D'Argenson in 1757, complains that, 'at the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the Irish were abandoned to their evil fortune. No stipu-

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 521, 540, 557.
[2] *Tome Supplémentaire*, xv.

lation was made for the revocation of an Act passed by the Irish Parliament during the war, which incapacitated all Irishmen who were then in the French service, or who subsequently entered it, from succeeding to property. The French Government did not even stipulate for an amnesty for those who had already incurred the penalty pronounced by the Act, and yet,' continues the memoir, 'he who will read the second article of the Treaty of Utrecht, will find that Holland formally stipulated an amnesty for all the officers, soldiers, and subjects of France, who had served the Republic during the whole course of the war, with permission for them to re-enter into the enjoyment of their goods, privileges, rights, &c.—and it is well known that there were many of those subjects—even entire corps. What Holland then exacted from a king of France, a king of France might assuredly have exacted from a king of England.' He did not do so, and to this conspicuous abandonment and neglect the memorialists ascribed the Act of Parliament of 1757, which condemned to death all English, Irish, and Scotch subjects, who were found in the French service after September 29, 1757, or who should hereafter enter it.[1]

It was in the midst of the conferences of Lille, that the greatest Irishman of the eighteenth century—one of the greatest and best men who have ever appeared in English politics—vanished from the scene. The last days of Edmund Burke, though soothed by that deep, passionate, and devoted friendship, which he had pre-eminently the gift of inspiring, were very sad. The death of his only son had broken his heart; and in the triumph of the Revolution, he saw the eclipse of all that he valued the most in public life. 'If I shall live much longer,' he wrote shortly before his death, 'I

[1] French Foreign Office.

shall see an end of all that is worth living for in this world.' Among the subjects that occupied his thoughts during the last months of his life, Irish affairs took a prominent place, and he watched them with the gloomiest forebodings. 'The Government,' he wrote, 'is losing the hearts of the people, if it has not quite lost them. . . . The Opposition in that country, as well as in this, is running the whole course of Jacobinism, and losing credit amongst the sober people, as the other loses credit with the people at large.'[1] The United Ireland movement he regarded as one of the greatest calamities that could have befallen the country, and he predicted utter ruin if it succeeded. 'Great Britain,' he wrote, 'would be ruined by the separation of Ireland; but as there are degrees even in ruin, it would fall the most heavily on Ireland. By such a separation, Ireland would be the most completely undone country in the world; the most wretched, the most distracted, and in the end, the most desolate part of the habitable globe. Little do many people in Ireland consider how much of its prosperity has been owing to, and still depends upon, its intimate connection with this kingdom.'[2] Burke died on July 9, and at his own urgent request he was buried, without pageantry or ostentation, in the quiet churchyard of Beaconsfield, and in the same grave as his son and brother. 'There is but one event,' wrote Canning to Malmesbury, 'but that is an event for the world. Burke is dead. . . . He had among all his great qualities, that for which the world did not give him sufficient credit, of creating in those about him, very strong attachments and affection, as well as the unbounded admiration, which I every day am more and more convinced was his due.

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 433.

[2] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 393.

. . . He is the man that will mark this age, marked as it is itself by events, to all time.'[1]

The intrigues of the French Revolutionists with the United Irishmen, which had been in some degree suspended by the probability of peace, received a new stimulus from the rupture of the negotiations, but only a small part of them escaped the notice of the English Ministers. Their channels of information were numerous and very good. In the middle of May, they received from McNally an account of the mission of Lewins,[2] and they learnt from the same informant in July, that McNevin had disappeared, and was believed by James Tandy to have gone to France. Later letters informed them, that a man named Chambers had brought from France assurances, that the French Government would make no peace which did not include the independence of Ireland; that an invasion was promised when the first fair winds blew after the equinoctial gales; that Tone and Napper Tandy were to take part in it, and that the French Government had agreed to give Ireland complete independence. 'All

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 398, 399.

[2] J. W., May 16, 1797. On June 20 the Prince de Bouillon, who appears to have frequently given valuable information, wrote to Dundas, on the authority of one of the members of the Council or Committee at Paris, that a 'project against Ireland digested by Buonaparte, and intended to be committed to his direction and execution in the event of a separate peace being signed with the Emperor, had been under consideration and accepted.' This letter was at once forwarded to Camden, and it was corroborated in July by a letter from Wickham, who stated that an expedition to Ireland had been finally determined on; that the command had been offered to Buonaparte, who (on the advice of Barras) declined it; that it was then assigned to Hoche, and that the chiefs of the conspiracy in Ireland had received directions to remain quiet till the beginning of August. (Wickham's *Correspondence*, ii. 41, 42.) Other letters of the Prince de Bouillon, about the intended invasion of Ireland, had been written Oct. 4, 1796, Feb. 14, 1797.

mouths,' said McNally, 'were spreading this news through every village in the kingdom,' and preparations were busily making to receive the invaders.[1] Higgins furnished an independent corroboration of these statements, and he mentions a meeting in Dame Street, in which, in the presence of Emmet, Arthur O'Connor, and other leaders, letters were read from McNevin, and from Browne of Antrim, giving the most absolute and unequivocal assurance of the French Directory having agreed to an invasion of Ireland, 'for the purpose of assisting the natives to rise in arms, and throw off the English yoke.'[2]

The Government were perfectly aware that Hamburg was the great centre of Irish diplomacy; they discovered the part which Lady Edward Fitzgerald took in the correspondence, and the lady to whom her letters were addressed; and they even derived some of their best information about the conspiracy in Dublin, from Hamburg letters. Lord Grenville had a correspondent in that town, from whom he obtained much information in the August of 1797, and a still more important channel of information was soon afterwards opened by Lord Downshire. The new informer was Samuel Turner, who was the son of a person of some property near Newry, and who had taken a conspicuous part in a committee of Ulster United Irishmen, formed in the spring of 1797 for the purpose of baffling Government prosecutions. He fled from Ireland, went to Hamburg in June, lived there under the name of Furnes, and seems to have obtained the confidence of Reinhard, who gave him a passport, with which he went to Paris at the end of July. It appears to have been in the winter of 1797, that he first undertook,

[1] J. W., July 28, Sept. 11, 25, Dec. 8, 1797.
[2] F. H., Oct. 17, 20, 1797.

through the medium of Lord Downshire, to give information to the English Government, and he gave them full and valuable details, not only about the proceedings of the conspirators on the Continent, but also about the names, characters, and objects of the leading United Irishmen in Ireland. From no other source, indeed, does the Government appear, at this time, to have received accounts which were at once so ample and so accurate, for Turner was quite free from the anxiety to screen individuals, which was manifest in the letters of McNally.[1]

After the illustrations that have been given, of the characters of the men who held the first positions in Paris, it will not appear surprising that there also the English Government were able to obtain abundant information. The names of the informers were carefully concealed by the few persons who were in the secret, even in their confidential correspondence, but they will probably, some day, be found among their unpublished papers, and the mystery might perhaps be even now unravelled from accessible documents, if something of the patience and ingenuity that have been applied to the authorship of Junius, were devoted to the task. Most of this information was probably ultimately due to William Wickham, who had been sent to Switzerland on a special mission in October 1794, and had been appointed, about nine months later, minister in that country. It was his special task to assist with money and with advice the French emigrants and the

[1] Turner's letters to Lord Downshire and to the ministers were signed 'Richardson,' but his true name was sent by Camden to Portland, Dec. 9, 1797. His full and interesting revelations are at the Record Office. See especially Dec. 9, 19, 1797, and also a letter from 'Richardson' to Lord Downshire, dated Nov. 19, 1797, sent by Camden to Portland, Jan. 5, 1798. See, too, the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 277–288.

conspirators and insurgents against the Revolutionary Government in the interior of France, and he succeeded in opening communications with great numbers of Frenchmen, in confidential and important positions.[1] Among them was Pichegru,[2] one of the ablest of the French generals, who, as early as 1795, appears to have meditated a Royalist restoration, and to have looked forward to playing the part which Monk played in England; which Benedict Arnold wished to play in America, and Dumouriez in France. Pichegru's negotiations with the Royalists were in part discovered, and he was removed from his military command, but he was speedily elected a member of the Council of the Five Hundred, which was strongly opposed to Jacobin violence, and he was president of that body when the Revolution of the 18th fructidor ruined his prospects, and condemned him to transportation to Guiana. Barthélemy had been French Minister in Switzerland, when Wickham was in that country. Wickham describes him as very hostile,[3] but the English Minister succeeded in opening some channel of information which enabled him to see the most confidential correspondence and instructions of his rival.[4] Whether this source of information was still available when Barthélemy became one of the Directors, I am not able to say; but there is at least good reason for believing, that men in very

[1] See that curious and very instructive book, the *Correspondence of William Wickham*; and also *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 454, 531. A quantity of letters, addressed in cipher and under false names, fell into the hands of Moreau, who, however, for a long time thought fit to conceal the fact, probably because he had himself been mixed up with Royalist conspiracies. Wickham's *Correspondence*, i. 416; ii. 28. Lacretelle, *Précis Historique de la Révolution. Directoire*, ii. 49–57, 109.

[2] Wickham's *Correspondence*, i. 184, 274, 275, 282, 283, 326, 327, 356, 357, 369, 374–378, 472, 492–495; ii. 40.

[3] Ibid. i. 65–67.

[4] Ibid. i. 31, 155, 339, 356, 462, 463.

confidential positions, both in the French Foreign Office and about the Directors, were in English pay. The *arrêté* of the French Directory, ordering the expulsion of Malmesbury from French soil, was communicated at once by a secret channel to London, and was known to Pitt even before it was known to Malmesbury,[1] and two important letters from Reinhard to De la Croix, relating to the mission of Lewins, and also a French translation of McNevin's memorial to the Directory, speedily found their way into the English archives.[2]

The hopes of the conspirators were now principally directed to the spread of disaffection in the English navy, and to the Dutch expedition for the invasion of Ireland which was preparing at the Texel. The first evil had attained its climax before the conferences of Lille, and had probably been one of the reasons which made the English Ministers so anxious to negotiate. Some serious signs of mutiny, which had appeared in the fleet before Cadiz, had been repressed with great courage and energy, and five of the mutineers had been hanged;[3] but in the April of 1797, a mutiny broke out in the Channel fleet at Spithead, which in its magnitude and success had no precedent in English history. The grievances alleged by the seamen were serious, and

[1] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 580, 581. It is said to have been communicated to Pitt by a banker named Boyd. In the Irish State Paper Office there is a letter (Sept. 9, 1796), signed N. Madgett, containing some (not very important) information from Paris. The writer seems to have been a relation of the Madgett often mentioned by Tone, who was very confidentially employed in the French Foreign Office.

[2] See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 272–310. Compare *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iii. 520, 580. In a letter written as early as Aug. 30, 1797, Camden comments upon McNevin's plan for a descent on Ireland, which, he says, 'is conceived very ably, and shows a thorough knowledge of the dispositions of the country.' (Camden to Portland, Aug. 30, 1797.)

[3] James's *Naval History*, ii. 60, 61.

for the most part only too well founded. Their pay had been unchanged since the reign of Charles II., though the price of provisions had greatly, and, since the outbreak of the war, enormously risen, and though the allowances both of the army and the militia had been recently increased. The Greenwich pensions for sailors were still but 7*l.* a year, while the Chelsea pensions for soldiers were 13*l.* Unfair and unequal distribution of prize money; defects, both in quality and quantity, in the allowance of food; the excessive severity of some of the rules of the service, and the harsh and tyrannical conduct of many officers, were also alleged. Reports of spreading discontent came to the Admiralty, and orders were given to send the fleet to sea, but an immediate revolt was the result. It was so perfectly concerted, that the whole Channel fleet, on which the security of the English coast mainly depended, passed without a blow into the hands of the mutineers, and it remained in them from the fifteenth to the twenty-third of April. The Admiralty were obliged to negotiate, and the offer of a general pardon, and the concession of all the chief demands, induced the sailors to return to their allegiance. Doubts, however, soon spread, and false reports were circulated, and on May 7, when a rumour had arrived, that a French fleet had left Brest harbour, and when orders were given to the British fleet to set sail, the mutiny broke out again. After a slight resistance, it was perfectly successful; the unpopular officers were sent on shore, and for several days the situation seemed desperate. On the 14th, however, Admiral Howe, who was very popular with the sailors, went down to the fleet, and succeeded in bringing it back, but only on condition that a large number of the officers were superseded. The fleet then sailed for the coast of Brittany.

A precedent so fatal to all discipline threatened an

utter disorganisation of the British navy, at a time when the very salvation of the Empire depended upon its efficiency. The contagion of successful insubordination naturally spread. On May 10, while Howe was quelling the mutiny at St. Helen's, another broke out in the ships at Sheerness, and it was soon evident that, unlike the former mutiny, a strong political element mingled with it. Revolutionary handbills had been industriously circulated, and active agitators appeared among the sailors. The mutineers chose a bold, ambitious, and educated sailor named Parker for their admiral. Under his orders the revolted fleet sailed to the Nore, and partly by persuasion, and partly by force, all the ships of war in the Nore and in the Medway were brought into the conspiracy. The news spread to the northern fleet, which was blockading the Dutch near Texel; the red flag of revolt was speedily hoisted, and the greater part of the fleet abandoned Admiral Duncan in the face of the enemy, and sailed for the Nore. The Board of Admiralty went to Spithead, and tried to negotiate with the mutineers, but without success. The revolted squadron was raised by the ships from the North to twenty-four sail. It proceeded to blockade the mouth of the Thames and seize merchant vessels, and the inhabitants of the towns along the coast began moving their families and their goods, in hourly expectation of a bombardment, not by a foreign, but by an English fleet.

Never, perhaps, in the long history of England, had there been a period when the peril was so great. Happily, both the French and the Dutch were unprepared, ill informed, and perfectly passive, for if an invasion of the North of Ireland had been undertaken in these critical weeks, it could not possibly have been prevented. The Government and country met the danger with courage and determination. A flotilla of

gunboats was fitted out. Volunteers were raised. The buoys and beacons at the mouth of the Thames were removed. Soldiers were massed along the threatened parts of the coast; batteries were constructed, and furnaces for heating shot red hot prepared. In response to a King's message, the Parliament hastily passed a stringent law for repressing treason in the army and navy, and a royal proclamation forbade, under pain of death, all intercourse, either personal or by letter, with the ships that were in rebellion.

These methods gradually succeeded. The difficulties of obtaining water and provisions; the divisions and insubordination that soon broke out in the revolted fleet; the feeling of loyalty and patriotism, which was by no means extinct among the sailors, and the clear signs that the nation repudiated and reprobated their conduct, had soon their effect. Parker speedily lost his authority, and every ship was left to its own guidance. In each of them there was a loyal element, and in most of them there was soon one of those strong reactions of feeling to which impulsive sailors are peculiarly liable. It was a strange and touching fact that, on June 4, the King's birthday, the red flag was hauled down on every ship except that of Parker, and a royal salute was fired, and the royal colours were hoisted. Soon ship after ship began to drop away. Lord Northesk, the captain of one of them, who had been detained as prisoner, was sent on shore to carry a letter to the King. The sailors in the fleet at Plymouth, and the sailors in the fleet at Spithead, exhorted their revolted comrades to make their submission. The ships from the northern fleet went back to Admiral Duncan, and the whole fleet at last returned to its allegiance. On June 14, the mutiny of the Nore was terminated by the arrest of Parker, and a few days later he was tried and hanged. Some of the other ringleaders were either executed or flogged.

It is not surprising that, after such an episode, all the enemies of England should have entertained sanguine hopes that the invincible fleet would soon perish by internal decay. Few persons could have expected that its tone and discipline and efficiency could be speedily restored, and some months elapsed before all dangerous symptoms had passed. In September, the crew of a frigate called the 'Hermione,' which was quartered in the West Indies, being exasperated by the gross tyranny of their captain, rose in mutiny, murdered their officers and carried the ship into a Spanish port, and in the following month serious signs of insubordination appeared in the ships at the Cape of Good Hope.[1] The reputation of British sailors had never sunk so low as in the spring and summer of 1797. But the grievances that were felt, were much more professional than political; the evil was much more riotous insubordination than deliberate disaffection; and good administration, the redress of grievances, and perhaps, still more, active service under commanders in whom the sailors had unbounded confidence, soon effected a cure. It is a memorable fact, that the few years that immediately followed the mutiny of the Nore, form one of the most glorious periods in the whole history of the British navy.

That history is, indeed, a very singular one, when we consider at once the elements of which the British navy was composed, the treatment it underwent, and the services it rendered. Criminals whose offences were not very great, or against whom the legal evidence was not perfectly conclusive, were at this time constantly permitted to escape trial, by enlisting in it, and, as we have already seen, the press-gangs hung specially around the prison doors, to seize upon discharged prisoners when their sentences had expired. The navy, too, was

[1] James's *Naval History*, ii. 102–104.

usually the last resort of tainted reputations and broken careers. Scapegraces in respectable families, disqualified attorneys, cashiered excisemen, dismissed clerks, labourers who through idleness or drunkenness had lost their employments, men from every walk of life, who, through want of capacity or want of character, had found other careers closed to them, poured steadily into it.[1] With these were mixed multitudes of United Irishmen, and of other Irish peasants, who had been torn from their cabins by the illegal violence of Lord Carhampton, or under the provisions of the Insurrection Act; and multitudes of merchant seamen who were victims of the press-gangs. The ships were often hells upon earth. The pay was miserable. The allowances were inadequate. The lash was in constant use, and in no other English profession were acts of brutal violence and tyranny so common. Yet it was out of these elements, and under these circumstances, that a navy was formed, which under Duncan, and Collingwood, and Nelson, covered England with undying glory, carried her triumphantly through the struggle with the united navies of the Continent, swept every sea, and defeated every rival. Reckless courage and contempt for death, a boundless spirit of adventure, complete devotion to every chief who was fully trusted, discipline and fertility of resource in the hour of battle, kindliness and chivalry in the hour of victory, were seldom wanting, and the careless, dauntless, generous, childlike sailor type, which shines so brightly in the life of Nelson, and in the songs of Dibdin, is perhaps more popular than any other with the English people.

All the qualities of the British navy were now needed to guard against the storm which was brewing in the North. Wolfe Tone arrived at the Texel on

[1] See the *Annual Register*, 1797, p. 208; James's *Naval History*, ii. 65.

July 8, and his journals furnish a vivid and authentic picture of the expedition.[1] The admiral, De Winter, and still more, General Daendels—a man who, in after years, played a great part as Governor of Java—at once impressed him by their manifest resolution and ability, and he was no less struck by the enormous superiority of the Dutch fleet at the Texel to the French fleet at Brest. The Dutch expedition for the invasion of Ireland, now consisted of fifteen ships of the line, besides ten frigates and sloops, and 13,544 soldiers, a force, in the opinion of Tone, amply sufficient to accomplish the task; and a French expedition, in which Hoche was to take part, was intended to follow it. The number of the ships with Duncan varied greatly, and the intelligence relating to them was very scanty. At the period of the mutiny of the Nore, the desertion of many ships is said to have reduced the fleet almost to a skeleton,[2] but at that time the Dutch expedition was still unprepared. On July 9, all was ready at the Texel, and at this date the Dutch admiral estimated that the ships of the line in the English fleet were at the utmost not more than thirteen, and he believed that they could make no effectual opposition.[3] This forecast may have been too confident, but English sailors, who knew how immeasurably superior the Dutch navy still was to the navies of France and Spain, in seamen, ships, and discipline, and how stubbornly it had always contended with England for the empire of the sea, would hardly

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 419–441.

[2] James states that Admiral Duncan then found himself with only one ship besides his own, but that he concealed the desertion from the Dutch by making signals, 'as if to the main body of his fleet in the offing.' (*Naval History*, ii. 66.) In the very elaborate account, however, of the mutiny in the *Annual Register*, it is said that Duncan was deserted by only four men-of-war and one sloop, and that the other ships remained with him. (*Annual Register*, 1797, pp. 214, 215.)

[3] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 433.

think lightly of a combat with a superior Dutch fleet, commanded by a very competent admiral, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the enemies' coast.

But the winds, which had so signally defeated the French expedition to Bantry Bay, when success seemed almost within its grasp, once more assisted the English, in a way which in another age would have been deemed manifestly providential. Day after day, week after week, with a monotony which rather resembled the trade winds of the tropics, than the inconstant climate of the North, the wind blew steadily against the Dutch, making it impossible for their fleet to sail out of the Texel. A concurrence of wind and tide was necessary for it to do so, and for more than six weeks, this concurrence never once occurred. In the mean time, Duncan received reinforcements, and the favourable season was fast passing away. The diary of Tone describes graphically the rage of disappointed hope that was gnawing at his heart. 'At Brest, we had, against all probability, a fair wind for five days successively, during all which time we were not ready, and at last, when we did arrive at our destination, the wind changed, and we missed our blow. Here all is ready, and nothing is wanting, but a fair wind. . . . Everything now depends upon the wind, and we are totally helpless. . . . I am, to-day, eighteen days aboard, and we have not had eighteen minutes of fair wind. . . . I am, to-day, twenty-five days aboard, and at a time when twenty-five hours are of importance. There seems to be a fate in this business. Five weeks, I believe six weeks, the English fleet was paralysed by the mutinies at Portsmouth, Plymouth, and the Nore. The sea was open, and nothing to prevent both the Dutch and French fleets to put to sea. Nothing was ready; that precious opportunity, which we can never expect to return, was lost; and now that we are ready here, the

wind is against us, the mutiny is quelled, and we are sure to be attacked by a superior force. . . . Had we been in Ireland, at the moment of the insurrection of the Nore, we should, beyond a doubt, have had, at least, that fleet. . . . The wind is as foul as ever, viz. south-west, in or near which point it has now continued thirty-six days that I am aboard.'[1]

Two United Irishmen, fresh from Ireland, arrived at the beleaguered fleet, and their news was not encouraging. The people, they said, were losing confidence in the organisation, and in French assistance, especially since the French Government had suffered the great crisis of the mutiny to pass, without making the smallest attempt to profit by it. They waited, in general, till the last day allowed by the proclamation, and then made their submission, took the oath of allegiance, received their pardon, and surrendered their arms. There were fewer guns than was supposed, among the United Irishmen, and their leaders seemed wanting in promptitude and courage. Three months ago, the United Irishmen said, an expedition to Ulster with only 500 men would have succeeded, but 'public spirit was exceedingly gone back in that time, and a great number of the most active and useful chiefs were either in prison or exile.' Still, Down and Antrim were ready to rise, and it was reported that there were, last June, in the former county, 'twenty-four regiments of 1,000 men each, ready organised, with all their officers and sub-officers.' Tone himself believed, that if either the Dutch or the French effected a landing, the submissive attitude of the people would speedily cease. 'If no landing can be effected, no part remains for the people to adopt but submission or flight.'[2]

One other judgment of the probable effects of an

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 421, 424, 427, 435.
[2] Ibid. ii. 428, 436.

invasion, given about the same time, by a man who was very competent to estimate them, may here be cited. McNally reported a conversation between Keogh, Braughall, and himself, in which Keogh said, 'that an invasion some time since would have settled the government of the country without bloodshed, for men of influence would have stood forward between the adherents of Government and the enemy; but now, who could venture to say, he could control the resentment of a people, whose injuries accumulate every day?' 'He thought,' continues McNally, 'an invasion would be attended with great bloodshed. I think so, too. I have no doubt, but every man who has taken an active part against the Northern insurgents, and the Catholic claims, stands proscribed.'[1]

In the middle of August, Tone learnt, what he had long feared, that the expedition to Ireland, at least on its original scale, was, for the present, abandoned. The Dutch admiral represented that, owing to the long enforced delay, the provisions of the fleet were falling short; that the favourable season had almost passed; that the English fleet was now stronger than the Dutch one, and that, under these circumstances, an expedition encumbered with the great number of slowly sailing transports, that was required for an army of 14,000 men, would be exceedingly rash, if not absolutely impracticable. Various alternative plans were proposed. One was to place two or three thousand soldiers on board the frigates, and with them to endeavour to reach the Irish coast. Another was, that the fleet, alone, should, on a favourable opportunity, sail out, and encounter that of Duncan, and that if it won the day, and the English fleet was seriously weakened, the enterprise should be resumed, but the troops, in the first place, at

[1] J. W., Sept. 19, 1797.

any rate, landed on the nearer coast of Scotland. A third was to land the troops where they might be collected in forty-eight hours; to give out that the expedition was abandoned, and then, when the vigilance of the English was relaxed, and the equinoctial gales obliged them to seek a port, to seize a favourable opportunity to reach the coast of Scotland. It was proposed that a French expedition should be directed to the same point, and it was hoped that a powerful army might be assembled in Scotland, part of which might menace England with invasion, while the remainder was despatched to Ulster. In the beginning of September, Tone was sent by the Dutch general, to communicate this plan to Hoche.[1]

Little more than a month later, all such schemes were crushed by the great battle of Camperdown. On October 8, the Dutch fleet sailed out with a favourable wind, and on the 11th, it encountered Duncan, nine leagues from Scheveningen. In ships, the fleets were about equal, but the English were superior in the number of men, and in the weight of metal. The battle was a very obstinate one. It was afterwards noticed, that whereas in most battles with the French and

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*. On Aug. 30, Camden wrote that Cooke had heard from 'a clever man, high in confidence among many of the leaders of the United Irishmen,' that a French invasion was definitely determined on; that it was to take place in the first fine weather after the storms of the autumn equinox; that Tandy, Tone, and Lewins were the principal agents, but that there were other subordinate ones employed in carrying intelligence; that Tandy was to have a military command, and Tone to be secretary to the commander of the land forces; and finally, that all intelligence from France had come through London and by parole. 'All mouths,' he added, 'are at work whispering the intelligence from France, and thereby spreading it through the country.' 'Peaceable conduct is the order of the day.' (Camden to Portland, Aug. 30, 1797.) For the sources of this information, see pp. 165, 166.

Spaniards, the English masts and riggings were shattered and torn, in this action nearly every shot from the enemies' guns struck the opposing hulls, and the great and almost equal bloodshed on each side [1] showed how stubbornly the day was fought. It ended, however, in a complete English victory. The sailors, who had so lately been in open mutiny, fought with all the valour of their forefathers. The flagship of Duncan and the flagship of De Winter, which were equal in size, lay for three hours alongside of each other, within the distance of a pistol shot, and when at last the Dutch admiral struck his flag, he is said to have been the only man on board unwounded. Nine Dutch ships of the line, and two Dutch frigates, were captured. The shattered remnant of the fleet took refuge in the Texel, and another of the great dangers that had menaced England passed away.[2]

A new and not less serious stroke had just fallen on the United Irishmen and on their cause. Two Frenchmen, who had seemed destined to play foremost parts in Revolutionary France, had thrown themselves heartily into the scheme for the invasion of Ireland. One of them was Carnot, who had fallen in the Revolution of the 18th fructidor. The other was Hoche, who was looked upon as the most serious probable rival of Buonaparte, and in whom Tone placed his highest hopes. Tone now found the young general so weak, that he had to be assisted from room to room by his grenadiers, and with that dry, hollow cough, which indicates the final stage of rapid consumption. He died on the morning of September 19, and with him perished the last serious hope of French assistance. French states-

[1] The Dutch lost more than 1,100, the English more than 1,000 men.

[2] See James's *Naval History*; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 69-71.

men still, as we shall see, endeavoured to raise embarrassments to England in Ireland; but Buonaparte was completely sceptical about Irish revolution, and no extended scheme for the separation of Ireland from Great Britain was again undertaken. At the end of 1799, Lewins presented a remarkable memoir to the French Government, on the effects of the legislative Union which was then impending. 'After the formal and reiterated assurances,' he said, 'given me from the moment when, on the invitation of General Hoche, I went from Frankfort to Paris, I cannot doubt, that it is the fixed resolution of France in all ways to assist the Irish in shaking off the English yoke, and to make no peace in which this great object was not accomplished,' and 'yet,' he continued, 'when I think of the little attention paid by the French to Irish affairs, since the death of Hoche, in spite of my pressing requests, and the indifference with which the Union seems regarded, it needs my unlimited faith in the promises of the French Government to sustain my hope.'[1]

We must now return to the course of events in Ireland itself. The Irish Parliament was prorogued on July 3, and shortly after dissolved. This was the last dissolution before its final abolition, and it was not due to any signs of opposition. Camden wrote, that the House of Commons had shown, during a critical period, 'the most marked firmness and spirit, and the most unbounded liberality;' a determination 'to stake their existence with that of the sister kingdom.'[2] For a time he was inclined to think that it would be better that the House should meet once more; but it was ultimately decided, that the present moment was very

[1] Memoir of Thompson (Lewins) on the effects of the Union, 26 primaire, an 8. (F.F.O.)

[2] Camden to Portland, June 17, 1797.

propitious for a dissolution. As usual, one of the first tasks of the ministers was to provide for a long list of parliamentary supporters, in order 'to carry into execution those promises which Government was under the necessity of contracting in the course of that Parliament.' Camden accordingly recommended that three viscounts should be made earls, and three barons, viscounts. Lady O'Neil was made a viscountess, and Mrs. Toler, the wife of the Solicitor-General, a baroness; and six new peers, as well as five baronets, were created. To the great displeasure of the Lord Lieutenant, two of the new peers were Englishmen, who were apparently unconnected with Ireland, and who were rewarded for English services with Irish peerages.[1]

Another peerage shortly after followed, which gave rise to some curious letters, and which has real interest and importance. Few names appear more frequently in the Irish history and Government correspondence of the eighteenth century, than that of Lord Kenmare, but the person so designated had in reality no right to the title which he assumed, and which by social usage was invariably given to him. His ancestor, Sir Valentine Browne, had been made Viscount Kenmare and Baron Castlerosse by James II. immediately after his abdication, and these titles had never been recognised or ratified by the new Government. The present head of the family had eminent claims upon the Government, from his services in maintaining order and loyalty in Kerry, and perhaps still more from his conduct as the leader of the moderate party in the Catholic Committee, and he had long been extremely anxious to obtain a legal right to the titles which he bore. He had petitioned for this under Lord Westmorland; but though

[1] Camden to Portland, July 8, Aug. 7, Oct. 1797.

his petition was supported by the Lord Lieutenant, no answer appears to have been returned. In 1795, Camden made an application in his favour, but Portland answered that the King had said, 'Lord Kenmare certainly deserves attention, but has any Roman Catholic in this country been created a peer?' and Portland himself believed the request to be impracticable. Camden, however, now again urgently pressed the claim of Kenmare; and in a letter to Pitt himself, he suggested the possibility of 'some management which should make the peerage devolve upon him.'

The meaning of this last suggestion will be explained by the sequel. Portland wrote, that there were two serious objections to the proposal. In the first place, an arrangement was contemplated, which would have the effect of giving a peerage to another Catholic. Under Lord Westmorland's Government, a Galway Catholic gentleman, named Sir Thomas French, had been asked to make use of his influence upon certain members of his persuasion in the Catholic Committee, and he had done so in a way which the Government deemed so valuable, that Lord Westmorland promised to recommend him for a peerage. This peerage, however, was not to be given personally to himself, but to his mother, Lady French, who was a Protestant, and from whom it would in due course descend to him. The peerage had not yet been conferred, but Portland wrote, that 'Pitt considers Government to have been so pledged, as not to make it possible to deny or resist Lady French's claim.'

Portland added, however, that there was another and still graver obstacle to the proposal of Camden. 'Such I know to be the King's opinion with regard to the admission of Roman Catholics to seats in the Legislature, that I am sure I do not say too much, in declaring it to be my belief that there is not any measure

whatever, from which he would so determinately withhold his sanction, as that by which he would give *directly*, and by his own act, to a Roman Catholic the right of sitting and voting in Parliament, and I do not believe that he could reconcile himself to it, except in a circuitous way, even for the sake of Lord Kenmare, whose merits are most certainly as highly appreciated by his Majesty as by your Excellency, or by any person whatever. But when your Excellency recollects, that his Majesty's objections to granting the privilege to which Lord Kenmare would be entitled by the grant of a peerage, are founded not on principles of policy only, but of conscience, it must be unnecessary for me to insist.'

Camden was exceedingly disconcerted by this letter. All additions to the Irish peerage were made on the formal recommendation of the Lord Lieutenant, and he therefore spoke on the subject with authority. He answered, that the claims of Lord Kenmare were greatly and manifestly superior to those of Sir Thomas French, and that there was no difference in principle between giving a Catholic a peerage on account of his services on the Catholic question, and giving a peerage to the Protestant mother of a Catholic, on account of the services of her son on the same question, and in order that the peerage should devolve on him. There was no question of asking the King to give Lord Kenmare a right of sitting or voting in the House of Lords. He was excluded from the Legislature by oaths, which could only be repealed by Act of Parliament. Neither the King nor the English Government could suspect the Administration of Camden of any partiality towards Catholics, or of any wish to increase their political importance. He had more than once refused to recommend Lady French for a peerage, but as a distinct pledge appeared to have been given to her, he would

submit; but he could not too strongly express his opinion, that if this peerage was granted, the other could not with any propriety be withheld. If directly or indirectly any Catholic was made a peer, Kenmare had indisputably the first claim. Camden did not now press for either peerage, but he said, he must decline to recommend that for Lady French, 'unless the creation is accompanied by that of Lord Kenmare, or unless some means are found which may cause the title to devolve upon him.'

The King yielded to the desire of Camden. In the February of 1798, both Kenmare and Lady French were, on the same day, raised to the peerage, and the title of baron, which the King was at first disposed to give to Lord Kenmare, was, at the request of Camden, exchanged for a viscountcy.[1] The correspondence is especially important, as furnishing clear and unequivocal evidence, that if the King only hesitated about conferring merely honorary distinctions upon Catholics, he had, at least, to the full knowledge of his English Ministers, formed a fixed resolution, grounded upon religious scruples, that he would never consent to their admission into the Legislature. This fact had a fatal influence on the future history of the Catholic question, and it appears to me to make the conduct of the ministers inexcusable in having, at the time of the Union, endeavoured to win Catholic support by holding out hopes of emancipation, without taking any step to shake the resolution of the King; without the knowledge of the King; without communicating the royal sentiments to the Catholic leaders.

The election for the last Irish Parliament passed off quietly, and the influx of a great multitude of Catholic

[1] Camden to Pitt, Sept. 23; to Portland, Oct. 26; Portland to Camden, Oct. 19, 1797; Camden to Portland, Jan. 12, 22, 1798. The earlier applications appear from some letters of June 1795.

voters into the county constituencies appeared, for the present at least, to have made very little difference, and to have excited very little attention. Grattan refused to stand for this Parliament, and he gave his reasons in a long 'Letter to the Citizens of Dublin,' which was published as a pamphlet. It is a curious and most characteristic performance; eloquent, ingenious, full of sentences of condensed wisdom and beauty; but full also of overstrained metaphor and antithesis, of exaggerated and unexpected turns of phrase, of passages which were very little fitted to accomplish any useful and healing end. He mentions that, at the close of the American war, it had been a common saying in Tory circles, that Lord North ought to have admitted the claims of the Colonial Legislatures, and then to have endeavoured to re-establish British dominion by building up a dominant influence within them. This, Grattan said, had been the precise policy which had been pursued in Ireland since the declaration of independence. It had been the deliberate object of the Government, by systematic corruption, 'to give the monarch a power which the Constitution never intended; to make the King in Parliament everything, and the people nothing,' and thus to render absolutely abortive the parliamentary rights that had been nominally conceded. This attempt to regain by corruption what had been lost in prerogative, was the true cause of the disaffection which had now become so formidable. There had been concessions, it is true, but they had been of little avail, on account of the spirit in which the ministers had made them. 'In every Bill of a popular tendency, they resisted at first; they yielded at last, reluctantly and imperfectly, and then opposed, condemned, and betrayed the principle of their own acquiescence.' They agreed to the independence of the Irish Parliament, and then created a multitude of offices to make that independence an idle name.

They agreed to a place Bill, and yet contrived, after it was passed, to add largely to their patronage. They agreed, with extreme reluctance and after extreme vacillation, to a Bill giving the franchise to the Catholics, and they at the same time maintained their exclusion from Parliament, and used their influence to prevent their election to the corporations. 'It is an observation of Lord Bacon, that the fall of one of the Roman emperors was due, not to his tyranny nor his relaxation, but to both; and that the fluctuating system is ever fatal. . . . Unhappily, our ministers differed from Bacon; their system was faithful to no one principle, either of violence or concession.' 'Had the Government, instead of aggravating, restrained abuses, they would have put the State at the head of a spirit of reform which they could no longer resist, and could only hope to moderate. It was to such a policy, adopted by Queen Elizabeth, that the Church of England owes principally what it retains of power and splendour, preserved by the Government of the country, who took the lead in the Reformation.'

These words appear to me profoundly true. I shall not follow the Address through its summary of past Irish history, and through its well-worn arguments in favour of Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform. Grattan seemed blind to the strength of the religious animosities that were rising, and still clung to the illusion, which he shared with so many leading statesmen and thinkers, that Catholicism, or at least 'Popery,' had for ever passed away as a distinct and dangerous political force, and that 'priestcraft' was a mere 'superannuated folly.'

'The only impediment to the Catholic claim as the law now stands, is the oath requiring the abjuration of the worship of the Virgin Mary, and of the doctrine of the Real Presence. To make these points at such a

time as this, matter of alarm to the safety of the King, is . . . a mockery of the situation.' 'The Irish Catholic of 1792 does not bear the smallest resemblance to the Irish Catholic of 1692. The influence of Pope, priest, and Pretender are at an end. Other dangers and other influences might have arisen, . . . but those new dangers were to be provided against in a manner very different from the provisions made against the old.' 'The ministry, however, thought proper to persist in hostility to the Catholic body, on a false supposition of its bigotry. The consequence was that . . . the most popular and energetic [Catholics], disappointed, suspected, reviled and wearied, united with that other great body of the reformers and formed a Catholic, Presbyterian, and Protestant league, for the freedom of the religion, and the free and full representation of the people. Out of this league a new political religion arose, superseding in political matter all influence of priest and parson, and burying for ever theological discord in the love of civil and political liberty. This is at present in all political matters the Irish religion.' 'The progress of the human mind in the course of the last twenty-five years has been prodigious in Ireland. I remember when there scarcely appeared a publication in a newspaper of any degree of merit, which was not traced to some person of note on the part of Government or the Opposition; but now a multitude of very powerful publications appear from authors entirely unknown; . . . and when once the powers of intellect are possessed by the great body of the nation, it is madness to hope to impose on that nation civil or religious oppression.'

But the danger did not spring simply from the conditions of Irish life. The 'democratic principle' was now sweeping over Europe, and, 'like the Government, we wished to provide against the storm.' 'Demo-

cracy, a gigantic form, walks the earth, smiting crowns with a hundred hands, and opening for the seduction of their subjects a hundred arms.' 'We implored ministers against such an enemy to ally and identify the King with all his people, without distinction of religion.'

There were some things in the letter much more questionable than these. No candid man can, I think, deny that acts of illegal, criminal, shameful, and exasperating violence, were, at this time, committed in Ireland with the full sanction of the Government; but it seems to me equally impossible to deny that a conspiracy existed, with which ordinary law was utterly unable to cope, that the prompt disarming of a large section of the people had become imperatively necessary, and that, at a time when a French invasion might at any moment take place, it would have been suicidal madness to permit an unlimited sale of arms. Grattan, however, made no allowance for the enormous difficulties of this situation, and massed together the whole system of 'coercion' in an equal and undiscriminating condemnation. He was not content with denouncing 'the imprisonment of the middle orders without law; the detaining them in prison without bringing them to trial; the transporting them without law, burning their houses, burning their villages, murdering them, . . . preventing the legal meetings of counties to petition his Majesty, . . . and finally, the introduction of practices not only unknown to law, but unknown to civilised and Christian countries.' The Convention Act, the Gunpowder Act, the Insurrection Act, the suspension of the Habeas Corpus, the proclamation of General Lake, for disarming the people, were all equally condemned. Many magistrates and officers had, no doubt, acted with excessive violence; but it was absurd and mischievous rant, to accuse the Government of endeavouring 'to blood the magistracy with the poor man's liberty, and

employ the rich, like a pack of Government bloodhounds, to hunt down the poor;' it was uncandid and untrue to deny that 'a spirit of plunder,' as well as of 'politics,' was abroad, and that a great portion of the outrages that were taking place, were utterly unconnected with any desire for mere 'political reformation;' it was very useless to inveigh against the war at a time when there was no power, either in England or Ireland, that could have stopped it.

A few more sentences will show Grattan's view at its strongest. 'The trade of Parliament ruins everything; your ministers rested their authority entirely on that trade, till now they call in the aid of military power, to enforce corruption by the sword. The laws did, in my judgment, afford the Crown sufficient power to administer the country, and preserve the connection with Great Britain, but our ministers have despised the ordinary tract.' 'The historian of these melancholy and alarming times . . . will, if a candid man, close the sad account by observing that, on the whole, the cause of the Irish distraction of 1797 was the conduct of the servants of Government endeavouring to establish, by unlimited bribery, absolute power; that the system of coercion was a necessary consequence and part of the system of corruption; and that the two systems, in their success, would have established a ruthless and horrid tyranny, tremendous and intolerable, imposed on the Senate by influence, and the people by arms.'

This remarkable paper closed with a series of eloquent aspirations. 'May the kingly power, that forms one estate in our Constitution, continue for ever; but let it be, as it professes to be, and as, by the principles and laws of these countries, it should be, one estate only; and not a power constituting one estate, creating another, and influencing a third.

'May the parliamentary Constitution prosper; but

let it be an operative, independent, and integral part of the Constitution, advising, confining, and sometimes directing the kingly power.

'May the House of Commons flourish; but let the people be the sole author of its existence, as they should be the great object of its care.

'May the connection with Great Britain continue; but let the result of that connection be the perfect freedom, in the fairest and fullest sense, of all descriptions of men, without distinction of religion.

'To this purpose we spoke; and speaking this to no purpose, withdrew. It now remains to add this supplication, However it may please the Almighty to dispose of princes or of parliaments, may the liberties of the people be immortal.'[1]

These words were well fitted to sink deeply into the popular mind. Whether, amid the fever and distraction of the times, they were likely to fulfil any good purpose, is another question. Grattan himself, in after years, reviewed this portion of his career with the transparent candour which was one of his most beautiful qualities. The secession from Parliament appeared to him to have been a simple duty. He and his friends could not approve of the conduct of the United Irishmen nor of that of the Government, and they feared to encourage the former by making speeches against the latter. From the summer of 1795, when the old rulers and the old system came back; when military law was virtually established, and when poor men were transported without trial, the state of Ireland was, in truth, a state of war; the people looked to France, and the Government to arms; rebellion had become almost inevitable; its success would consign Ireland to French despotism and revolution, and its failure would probably be followed

[1] Grattan's *Miscellaneous Works*, pp. 40–64.

by the extinction of all popular influence and control. 'Our error,' he said, 'was in not having seceded sooner, for the Opposition, I fear, encouraged the United men by their speeches against the Government. . . . There was high treason, certainly, but the measures of the Government were so violent, that no man would sanction them. Nothing could excuse the torture, the whippings, the half hanging. It was impossible to act with them, and in such cases it is always better that a neutral party should retire. We could do no good. We could not join the disaffected party, and we could not support the Government.'

Coming to his letter to the citizens of Dublin, he says that it was considered, at the time, imprudent, and he acknowledged that the charge was a just one. 'It was true; it was well written, but it tended to inflame. I had also written strongly to the Catholics. I had just returned from England, and we smarted under the disappointment of Lord Fitzwilliam's recall. . . . We were angry. It was not wise, but there is no man, who, in a long public life, will not be guilty of some political errors.'[1]

Except perhaps in Ulster, where matters had been for some time subsiding, the last months of 1797 produced no alleviation in the state of Ireland, and Grattan and the Government differed little about its gravity, though they differed much about its causes and its remedies. Pelham, in a desponding private letter to Portland, complained that the language of the Opposition tended to alienate the people from England, and that absenteeism had a similar effect, but he laid special stress upon 'the religious distinctions, which will always make the lower class of the people more open to seduction than the same class of men in other coun-

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 345–347.

tries, and will make it impossible to expect any permanent security, either in peace or war, without a great military force.' Nothing, he thought, short of an establishment of the Catholic religion, would satisfy them; and he added with more truth, 'As long as the poor and the rich are of different persuasions in religious matters, there will always be a jealousy between the democratic and aristocratic parts of the Constitution.'[1]

Clare, who knew the country much better, expressed the Government view with force and candour. 'Emancipation and reform,' he said, 'were far short of the designs of the disaffected; the separation of the country from her Imperial connection with Great Britain, and a fraternal alliance with the French Republic, were the obvious purposes of the insurgents. The Government of Ireland had, by measures necessarily strong, at length quieted that part of the country in which the conspiracy originated. *These measures were, to his knowledge, extorted from the nobleman who governed this country*; they had been successful, and the state of the North at that day, was a proof of their wisdom. The county from which he had lately returned [Limerick], and which had formerly been a loyal and industrious county, was infested by emissaries from the North, exciting the peasantry to insurrection. Emancipation and reform were not the means which they employed for the seduction of the peasant. The suppression of tithes, the abolition of taxes, and exemption from the payment of rent, were the rewards they promised. Emancipation and reform were only used to delude the better classes.'[2] 'It is one great misfortune of this country,' he said in another speech, 'that the people of England know less of it than they know perhaps of any other nation in

[1] Pelham to Portland, Sept. 29, 1797.

[2] Plowden, ii. 652.

Europe. Their impressions I do verily believe to be received from newspapers, published for the sole purpose of deceiving them. There is not so volatile or so credulous a nation in Europe as the Irish; the people are naturally well disposed, but are more open to seduction than any man would credit who had not lived among them; . . . and therefore the kingdom of Ireland is, of all the nations of Europe, the most dangerous to tamper with or to make experiments upon. Her present disturbed and distracted state has certainly been the consequence of a series of experiments, practised upon her for a course of years.'[1]

In spite of the battle of Camperdown, the expectation of invasion was very constant. The rupture of the negotiations at Lille, and the definitive peace between France and the Emperor, had reduced the war, for the present, to a duel between France and England. Buonaparte himself was at Paris, organising an 'English army,' which, it was thought, might be directed wholly or partly to Ireland. He had interviews both with Lewins and Tone, and more than one assurance was sent to Ireland, that French soldiers would speedily arrive.[2] Dean Warburton discovered that in his district, which had a few weeks before become quite peaceful, men were going from house to house whispering the news, and telling the people that tithes and taxes would soon be abolished; and although he had reason to believe that he was himself personally popular, he feared that the people welcomed 'every circumstance that afforded the smallest hope of an invasion.'[3] McNally assured the Government that, at a party at Grattan's house, the opinion was unanimously expressed

[1] *Debate in the Irish House of Peers, Feb.* 19, 1798, pp. 132, 133.

[2] J. W., Sept. 11, Oct. 2; Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 454–456.

[3] Dean Warburton, Nov. 12, 1797; Jan. 29, 1798.

that an invasion would be attempted, and that if it succeeded, the only course would be to form a convention, exclusive of Parliament, to treat for the country with the French.[1] There were rumours of plots to seize Dublin Castle and barracks; confident assertions that, in a few weeks, all Ireland would be in a blaze; reports that a French expedition was about to start for Lough Swilly; that Lawless, Lord Cloncurry's son, had gone over to London to confer with a French agent; that Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor desired an immediate outbreak.[2]

Pelham was at this time in England, but Cooke sent to him, near the end of the year, a most circumstantial and alarming story which had come from McNally. It was, 'that Lord Edward received, some days since, orders from Paris to urge an insurrection here with all speed, in order to draw troops from England. In consequence of it, there was a meeting of the head committee, where he and O'Connor urged immediate measures of vigour. They proposed arming a body of 500 with short swords; that this body should repair to all the mass-houses at midnight Mass on Christmas morning; that by false attacks they should persuade the people to raise a cry that the Orangemen were murdering the Catholics; that, having raised the uproar, they should begin their attack on the Castle, &c. Many priests were anxious for this plan, but Emmet, Chambers, &c. opposed, and in consequence, the bishops, who were against outrage, put off Mass till seven o'clock in the morning. The moderate party are against insurrection till the French land. . . . Our friend received his intelligence from James Tandy, son of Napper; who was alarmed beyond expression at the

[1] J. W., Nov. 19.
[2] Pelham to King, Nov. 7; F. H. (Higgins), Dec. 9, 29; J. W., Nov. 19, Dec. 26, 1797.

scheme, and, being consulted, had opposed it.'[1] Next day, however, the Lord Lieutenant himself wrote that, 'the account which J. W. gave in writing, fell far short of the verbal communication made to me by Pollock.' He added, however, that he was glad that he had at once summoned the Speaker and the Attorney-General to Dublin, to consult about the measures to be taken, as the intention to produce an insurrection on Christmas Eve was undoubted. The propriety of arresting at once Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor was seriously discussed; but Camden reported that, 'under all the circumstances of our chance of further information, and under the impression of the disadvantage of taking up persons without bringing them to trial,' the idea was, for the present, relinquished.[2] It was observed, that there was, about this time, a strangely sudden diminution in the number of outrages; but it was doubtful whether this was due to the Government measures, or to the orders that came from the chiefs of the rebellion to avoid all provocation on the eve of the rising.[3]

Two other facts may be noticed, before drawing our account of the year to its close. Since the violent suppression of the 'Northern Star,' in May 1797, the United Irishmen had no recognised organ till the end of September, when a newspaper called 'The Press' was

[1] Cooke to Pelham (*Pelham MSS.*), Dec. 26, 1797.

[2] Camden to Pelham, Dec. 27. See, too, J. W., Dec. 26, 1797. By 'our friend,' McNally always means himself. In the *Memoirs of Miles Byrne* there is a case of United Irishmen acting for their own purposes the part of Orangemen, and thus producing a panic (i. 14, 15).

[3] 'Except the robbing of arms, no serious outrage has lately taken place in any part of the kingdom; but I believe this apparent calm is the consequence of very strict orders, which have been issued to the United Irishmen not to be guilty of any excess. These orders are accompanied with the assurance of assistance from France.' (Camden to Portland, Jan. 22, 1798.)

established, which for the next six months represented their aims with conspicuous ability. Its registered proprietor was an obscure printer named Finnerty, but it belonged in reality to a group of shareholders, among whom Lawless had the chief part, but which included also, Arthur O'Connor, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Bond, Chambers, and Jackson. Among the shareholders and occasional contributors, was Leonard McNally, whose share was probably paid by the Government, and who was thus able to obtain much additional information for his employers.[1]

The other fact was the arrival of a new Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. For some time Camden had felt that Lord Carhampton, though a man of undoubted zeal and courage, had neither the ability nor the tact required for his very difficult position, and he was much disappointed that Lord Cornwallis could not be induced to accept the military government of Ireland. A new overture, however, was more successful, and in November, Carhampton was removed to the post of Master of the Ordnance, and replaced by Sir Ralph Abercromby. This distinguished soldier had just returned from the West Indies. He knew Ireland well, having been quartered there before the outbreak of the war of the American Revolution, and having remained there during the whole period of its continuance. He was a man of a very independent and honourable character, and of liberal opinions, and he had the reputation of a commander who was not only skilful in the field, but also eminently successful in maintaining a high standard of discipline among his soldiers.

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[1] J. W., Oct. 17, 31, Nov. 19, 28, Dec. 15, 1797; Madden's *United Irishmen*, ii. 241–246. McNally positively states that it was Lawless, not Arthur O'Connor, who advanced most of the capital for the undertaking, but he says that O'Connor acted as editor.

Such an officer was peculiarly wanted in Ireland, but such an officer was very unlikely to find his task a smooth one. Dalrymple, who commanded in the South of Ireland, showed himself profoundly disappointed at not being promoted to the first place. Knox informed Pelham that Lake, who commanded in the North, was not on good terms with Abercromby; and almost immediately after the arrival of the new Commander-in-Chief, signs of friction began. Abercromby wrote to England, that he had accepted the command with great reluctance, owing to the nature of the Government; that he understood that, with the exception of the patronage, the army was to be totally under his command; and that he must come to a clear understanding on this point, as a command divided between himself and the Lord Lieutenant was entirely incompatible with good military administration; while Camden wrote confidentially that Abercromby was not easy to get on with, and very peremptory about managing military matters himself.[1]

All these signs were ominous, and the more Abercromby studied the state of affairs in Ireland, the less he was satisfied with them. The first thing which appeared to him absolutely necessary for the defence of the country in case of invasion, and for the enforcement of military discipline, was a concentration of the troops on a few points. Like Fitzwilliam, and Ponsonby, and Grattan, he believed that the suppression of riot and outrage, and the maintenance of internal tranquillity, must necessarily be entrusted chiefly to the yeomanry, and that the regular troops ought only to be employed on rare and serious occasions. Almost immediately after his arrival he went on a tour of inspection through

[1] Dalrymple to Pelham, Nov. 19; Knox to Pelham, Nov. 29; Abercromby to Elliot, Dec. 25; Camden to Pelham, Dec. 26, 1797.

the South of Ireland, and in that part of the country, at least, the danger from disaffection appeared to him to be exaggerated. A few extracts from his letters will give a clear view of his judgment of the situation, and of the course which he determined to adopt.

'The disturbances which have arisen in the South,' he wrote, 'are exactly similar to those which have always prevailed in that part of the country, and they hold out the old grievances of tithes and oppressive rents. The country gentlemen and magistrates do not do their duty; they are timid and distrustful, and ruin the troops by calling on them upon every occasion to execute the law, and to afford them personal protection.' 'With an army composed of so various a description of troops, and in a country so unprepared for war, it requires all the authority that the Lord Lieutenant can give me, to enable me to carry on the King's service.' 'As far as my information goes, the country through which I have passed [the neighbourhood of Cork] is in a state of tranquillity. . . . It would now be very desirable if the troops could, without alarming the gentlemen, be collected, and their discipline restored, which suffers exceedingly from their dispersed state. I am morally certain that many of the regiments could not at present take the field, from their various wants, which cannot be known or supplied till more brought together. The yeomanry appear to advantage; they are well clothed and mounted, and express great willingness and zeal. I am, however, nearly convinced that to bring them together, and to appoint officers to command them, must not be attempted. They must be left at home, and appointed to the defence of the interior.' 'The dispersed state of the troops is really ruinous to the service. The best regiments in Europe could not long stand such usage. . . . If I could be informed what number of regiments in aid of the yeomanry would be

wanted in each province for the preservation of the peace of the country, I would willingly abandon a certain proportion for that peculiar purpose, provided the remainder were to be kept together, and in a situation to move if a foreign enemy should appear. I have found the cavalry in general unfit for service, and more than one-half of the infantry dispersed over the face of the country, in general under officers very little able to command them. At Fermoy more than three-fourths of the light infantry are "on command."'[1]

Although a great part of the country was apparently in a state of tranquillity, there was, he said, reason to believe that the minds of the people were neither softened nor subdued, and there was a serious possibility of a French invasion. 'On the yeomanry and the exertions of the gentlemen, and of the well-disposed inhabitants of the country, its internal security must principally depend;' and he mentioned the great good which had been done in Scotland by loyalist associations, that had been formed in each county in 1792 and 1793.[2]

Abercromby might have found quite as good an example in the Irish volunteers during the period of the American war; and if Ireland in the last years had been governed on the principles of Grattan instead of on the principles of Clare, the gentry of all creeds might have still been able and willing to maintain the order of the country. Camden expressed his perfect agreement with this portion of Abercromby's recommendations. He mentions that he had communicated them to several gentlemen connected with different parts of the country, and found them very ready to adopt the suggestions; and he expressed, on his own

[1] Dunfermline's *Life of Abercromby*, pp. 84–86.

[2] Abercromby to Pelham, Feb. 21, 1798.

part, his appreciation of the great good sense and knowledge of the world that were combined with the military talents of Abercromby.[1] But no one, who has perused the letters which were pouring in from most parts of the country asking for military protection, can doubt that Abercromby's policy was likely to be far from popular, and in some of the worst districts the scattered yeomanry appear to have been almost disarmed by nocturnal parties.

Abercromby had another object before him, which brought him speedily into conflict with the men who had the leading influence in the Government of Ireland. It was to bring back the army into the limits of legality, and to put a stop to the scandalous outrages which were constantly occurring, if not under the direct prompting, at least with the tacit connivance, of Government officials. Almost immediately after his arrival in Dublin, he issued an order reminding the officers that, though they might sometimes be called upon to aid the magistrates, 'they must not forget that they are only called upon to support the laws of the land, and not to step beyond the bounds of them. Any outrage or excess, therefore, on their part is highly culpable, and they are strictly enjoined to observe the greatest moderation and the strictest discipline when they are called upon to execute this part of their duty.'[2]

The outrages which took place were of different kinds. Many were mere isolated acts of drunken or half-disciplined soldiers, scattered in small parties among the peasantry, and had little or no relation to politics. But a large class, of which the burning of houses formed the most conspicuous example, were

[1] Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, pp. 95, 96.
[2] Ibid. p. 77.

illegal acts of violence deliberately carried out in places where murders had been committed or where arms had been concealed, and deliberately screened by men in authority from the intervention of the law courts. Against the whole of this system, Abercromby resolutely set his face. In one case, when the sergeant of a fencible regiment had been murdered, and when the usual military excesses had followed, he wrote to Pelham: 'It is much to be regretted that the civil magistrate has not hitherto discovered the murderer of the sergeant, and I still more lament that no evidence has been brought forward sufficient to convict the authors of the notorious acts of violence which have been in some measure the consequence of the murder. It is to be hoped, sir, that the magistrates of the county of Kildare will be instructed to prosecute still further the investigation of this business. Although they may not discover the murderer of the sergeant, they cannot fail to discover the soldiers who first set fire to the houses and committed several acts of violence at noonday, and in face of all the inhabitants of Newbridge. The soldiers are all at Kildare, and every assistance shall be afforded in the further prosecution of the inquiry. The future discipline of the army may depend on the conduct observed in this affair. If the civil power should decline taking any further steps, it must be taken up in a different point of view.'

On another occasion, writing to General Johnson, who commanded at Fermoy, he fully approved of the assistance that general had given to the civil magistrates in their attempts to seize the perpetrators of two horrible murders which had just taken place, but added, 'I have always wished that the law should be supported by the troops when called on properly, but I have as strongly wished that they should not take any part that was not strictly legal. . . . I hope the

magistrates have not put their intention of burning houses in force. I hope the soldiers have taken no part in it.' 'I have endeavoured,' he wrote to the Duke of York, 'as far as possible to resist the interference of the troops in all matters where the civil magistrate ought alone to have interfered. I clearly saw that the discipline of the troops would be completely ruined, and that they would be led into a thousand irregularities contrary to law, which would bring disgrace upon themselves, and in which they ought not to be supported by the Government of the country.'[1]

Charlemont wrote about this time to Halliday, that Sir Ralph was acting 'with the strictest propriety in his most difficult situation, and has the happiness of being cordially disliked and abused.'[2] It is evident, indeed, how offensive his conduct must have been to men like Lake and Knox, who had steadily advocated the policy of burning houses; to Clare and Foster, who supported every measure of rigour in the Council; and to the many magistrates whose proceedings, frankly communicated to the Government in Dublin, have been already related.

These differences culminated in the famous general orders issued on February 26, 1798, from the Adjutant-General's Office. 'The very disgraceful frequency of courts-martial, and the many complaints of irregularities in the conduct of the troops in this kingdom,' they said, 'having too unfortunately proved the army to be in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to everyone but the enemy,' it had become necessary to enjoin all commanding officers 'to compel from all officers under their command the strictest and most unremitting attention to the discipline, good order, and conduct of their men, such as may restore

[1] Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, pp. 90–93. [2] Ibid. p. 90.

the high and distinguished reputation the British troops have been accustomed to enjoy in every part of the world.' 'It becomes necessary,' the writer added, 'to recur and most pointedly to attend to the standing orders of the kingdom, which, at the same time that they direct military assistance to be given at the requisition of the civil magistrate, positively forbid the troops to act (but in case of attack) without his presence and authority, and the most clear and precise orders are to be given to the officer commanding the party for the purpose.'[1]

These orders, though certainly not uncalled for by the circumstances of the case, produced a feeling approaching to consternation in Government circles both in England and in Ireland. They were issued without consultation with either Camden or Pelham, and at a time when Lord Moira had just brought forward his motion deploring the violent, tyrannical, and illegal proceedings in Ireland. They supplied the most decisive confirmation of his charges, and it is impossible to deny that they were in direct conflict with the proclamation of May 18, by which the military were instructed to act without waiting for the civil magistrate. The storm, however, did not immediately burst. In Parliament, Pelham defended the document as 'a military order called for by the relaxation of discipline in the army, composed as it is of very bad militia and fencible officers;'[2] and Abercromby himself repeatedly and earnestly disclaimed any political object, declaring that he had no sympathy with Lord Moira's politics, and had not even read his speech or the Chancellor's reply.

Abercromby immediately after issuing his orders

[1] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 214, 215. These orders have been often reprinted.

[2] Camden to Portland, March 15, 1798.

went on a tour of inspection in Ulster; and during his absence a cabal of the most formidable kind was instigated against him, which was greatly assisted by the serious illness of Pelham. Among the Pelham papers there is the draft of a curious letter, written but not sent by Pelham to the Duke of Portland, detailing what occurred. Pelham asserts that he had himself much reason to complain. His health in the beginning of 1798 was so broken, that he had begged to be relieved of his post; but he received no answer till the eve of the meeting of Parliament, when he was entreated to continue in office, and was obliged to undertake the management of the session, and among other things to give the official view of Abercromby's orders. In his own opinion, the description Abercromby gave of the state of the army was perfectly true, although the word 'licentiousness' was an injudicious one to use, and although part of the orders could not be reconciled with the proclamation of May 18. Pelham, by travelling through Ireland, had painfully convinced himself that the discipline of the army had been steadily declining up to the period of the arrival of Abercromby. He had, therefore, no hesitation in justifying Abercromby completely in Parliament, and his 'open and explicit justification' there, was at the time unanswered and uncensured. But no sooner had his illness become so serious that he was confined to his bed, than the Chancellor, the Speaker, and many others talked openly of impeaching Abercromby, and employing every means to punish and degrade him. Dinners were got up to bring together politicians of different types with this object, and a fixed resolve was expressed 'to get rid of him.' The Speaker, standing at the bar of the House of Lords to deliver the money Bills, took occasion, in the course of his address to the Lord Lieutenant, to commit the House of Commons against Abercromby by express-

ing the full confidence of the House in 'the high discipline' of the army. The measure, however, Pelham wrote, was not full till 'Your grace thought fit, in declaring the sentiments of the British Cabinet, to give countenance to the cabal here, . . . to condemn without hearing, not only Sir Ralph Abercromby, but Lord Camden.' It was evident, Pelham added, that Portland received private reports from members of the Irish Cabinet.[1]

'The hue and cry has been raised in London,' wrote Abercromby, 'by letters from hence, and has been carried on, as I hear, principally by that immaculate character, Lord Auckland.'[2] This information seems to have been quite true, and the part which Auckland played at this time was an extremely mischievous one. Having been, when Mr. Eden, Chief Secretary, under Lord Carlisle, he had formed Irish connections, and was in close correspondence with Clare, Beresford, and Cooke, the men who had taken the chief part in producing the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, and who were the centre of nearly everything that was reactionary and tyrannical in Irish government. Auckland was intimate with Pitt, and through his intervention these men had a constant channel of communication with Pitt, independently of the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary. They were at this time busily intriguing against Abercromby. Clare especially wrote furiously about 'the peevish indiscretion of Sir Ralph Abercromby's orders,' declared that 'he must have lost his senses,' and that it was 'provoking that the critical situation in which we stand made it ineligible to resent his intemperance as it merited,' and he added, in characteristic phraseology, that 'if Lord Moira had not retracted his charges against

[1] April 1799.
[2] Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, p. 126.

the Irish army, . . . this Scotch beast certainly would have given him strong grounds to stand upon.'[1]

The letter of the Duke of Portland to which Pelham refers, was written on March 11. In it Portland expresses his astonishment at the general order ascribed to Abercromby, about the conduct of the army; asks whether it is genuine, and declares that it is considered a great triumph for Lord Moira's party over that of the Chancellor, and that the Irish in London inferred from it that the loyalists were abandoned to ruin.[2]

Camden was evidently perplexed. He thought it right to communicate the substance of Portland's despatch to Abercromby, and he was himself exceedingly annoyed at the publication of the orders, but he was also extremely anxious that Abercromby should not resign his command. Such a resignation, he said, would deprive him in a very dangerous moment of a commander of tried military capacity, and would also add the weight of a most respectable opinion 'to the representations of those who are endeavouring to attack the system which has been pursued in Ireland.' He urged the English Ministers to be as conciliatory as possible towards Abercromby; and he wrote to Abercromby declaring his full confidence in him, absolving him from all imputation of having been actuated by a political motive, expressing a most earnest wish that he should continue at his post, but at the same time clearly stating his dissent from one portion of the orders. 'You have had the candour,' he wrote, 'to acknowledge that you did not consider the proclamation of May 18 as then in force. There is no doubt that until such a proclamation is recalled, or until the state of the country is so altered that it is a dead letter, the proclamation exists. Under

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 393–397. See, too, p. 411.

[2] Portland to Camden, March 11, 1798.

that proclamation the military received orders to act without waiting for the civil magistrate. . . . That necessity exists, and since it does exist, it appears to me that the proclamation must be acted on.'[1]

If it was, as Pelham stated, the object of Clare and Foster to 'get rid of Abercromby,' that object was most easily attained. He had accepted the command with great reluctance, and he was not a man who would acquiesce with the smallest patience in the censure of his superiors or the restriction of his powers. On the very day on which he received the letter from Camden he sent in his resignation, and all the efforts of Camden and Dundas were unable to induce him to withdraw it. 'I feel the most perfect conviction,' he wrote to Dundas, 'that the principal members of Lord Camden's Cabinet have lost their confidence, if they ever had any, in me; that they did during my absence attempt my ruin by machinations here and in England, is a matter beyond all doubt.'[2] In two private letters to relations he threw off the reticence required in official correspondence, and stated his case with a clearness that leaves nothing to be desired. 'The struggle,' he said, 'has been, in the first place, whether I was to have the command of the army really or nominally, and then whether the character and discipline of it were to be degraded and ruined in the mode of using it, either from the facility of one man, or from the violence and oppression of a set of men who have for more than twelve months employed it in measures which they durst not avow or sanction. . . . Within these twelve months every crime, every cruelty that could be committed by Cossacks or Calmucks, has been transacted here. The words of the

[1] Camden to Portland, March 15, 1798. Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, p. 101.

[2] Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, p. 106.

order of February 26 were strong; the circumstances required it. It has not abated the commission of enormities, and I will venture to predict that when the moment for calling forth the Irish army arrives, one-half of it will dissolve in a month. . . . Within less than two months since the issuing of my orders, a private man has thrown a chair at the colonel of his regiment, when sent for to be reprimanded. Houses have been burned, men murdered, others half hanged. A young lady has been carried off by a detachment of dragoons, and in the room where she was, an officer was shot through the thigh, and a blunderbuss snapped at another gentleman's head. These are but a few of the enormities which have disgraced us of late; were the whole to be collected, what a picture would it present! Such a degree of insubordination has been allowed, that the general officers write directly to the Castle, overlooking every decency and order. Almost all those who were here before me have a plot and a conspiracy which they cherish, and which is the subject of their correspondence and consequence; and instead of attending to their duty and to the discipline of their troops, they are either acting as politicians or as justices of the peace. . . . There must be some change, or the country will be lost. The late ridiculous farce acted by Lord Camden and his Cabinet must strike everyone. They have declared the kingdom in rebellion, when the orders of his Excellency might be carried over the whole kingdom by an orderly dragoon, or a writ executed without any difficulty, a few places in the mountains excepted.' 'Since my arrival here, I have been under the necessity of supporting myself by great exertions and strong representations, otherwise I should have been a mere cipher, or, what is worse, a tool in the hands of a party who govern this country. Their dislike to me has, of course, been visible, and in my absence they took the

opportunity of attempting to crush me. The Speaker, at the head of a junto, met in his chamber, canvassed and censured my order, and, interfering with a matter which did not belong to him, sent a deputation to Mr. Pelham to convey to him their opinion, and their determination to bring it before Parliament. This was only part of their plan; they wrote the most furious representations against me to the Duke of Portland, and to others of high rank in England. . . . After this there can be no mutual confidence. In times so difficult it is next to impossible to separate the civil and military business of the country; and with all the wisdom, all the vigour, that can be shown, it is impossible for any general to answer for success. Should, therefore, any one thing go wrong, I could expect nothing but the fullest effects of their resentment. . . . The abuses of all kinds I found here can scarcely be believed or enumerated. I tried various means with little success; it was necessary to speak out; the order is strong, but be assured it was necessary. The way in which the troops have been employed, would ruin the best in Europe. Here are 35,000 yeomanry, raised for the express purpose of protecting the country. . . . I therefore restricted the troops to the standing orders of the kingdom, that their discipline might be pursued if possible, and that the gentlemen might be obliged to trust to the yeomanry, on whom they must ultimately depend in case the troops should be called away to oppose a foreign enemy.'[1]

I have quoted these passages at much length, as they have a great historical importance. The resignation of Abercromby completed the fatal policy which the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam had begun, and it took away the last faint chance of averting a rebellion. If the

[1] Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, pp. 108-110, 112-114.

French had arrived, no human power could have prevented a rising; but in the absence of French assistance, it was perhaps still just possible that it might have been avoided. Many and various influences concurred to produce, accelerate, or extend it; but among them, the burning of houses, and other lawless acts of military violence, which were countenanced by the Government, had an undoubted part. The resignation of a Commander-in-Chief, mainly because he endeavoured to repress them, and because he had been censured for that endeavour, was one of the most calamitous events that could at this time have happened. Lord Camden was not blind to its probable effects. Scarcely any other event, he wrote to Portland, could have been so calculated 'to shake his Majesty's interest in Ireland,' and he strongly urged that, as Abercromby could not be induced to withdraw his resignation, he should be at once replaced by a very good general, as 'the nature of the government is now become so military, that it is absolutely essential that an officer of the most approved ability and experience should be sent to this kingdom.'[1]

Abercromby, though he refused to withdraw his resignation, spoke with great personal warmth and respect of Lord Camden, and consented, before leaving the country, to revoke the chief part of his general orders, and himself to go, armed with the full powers of martial law, to quell certain disturbances which had broken out in some counties of Leinster and Munster. The little town of Cahir, in Tipperary, had been occupied at noonday by a party of armed and mounted rebels, numbering, according to the Lord Lieutenant, 1,000,[2]

[1] Camden to Portland, March 26, 1798. Cornwallis wrote two days later: 'For your private ear, Abercromby is coming from Ireland. He has been exceedingly wrong-headed.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 333.)

[2] Camden to Portland, March 30, 1798.

and, according to the lowest estimate, at least 300 men, and they had proceeded systematically to disarm the inhabitants, and had carried away more than 100 stand of arms. Great robberies of arms were taking place in the county of Kildare. Lord Clare, in a letter burning with hatred of Abercromby, declared that the whole province of Munster, and many of the counties of Leinster, were in a complete state of anarchy, if not of open rebellion; that the system of robbery was rapidly extending, and that the gentry over large districts had universally fled for refuge to the towns. 'Under these circumstances,' he said, 'Lord Camden was obliged to issue a peremptory command to Sir Ralph, to revoke his general order, and to give immediate directions to the troops to reduce the rebels, for which desirable purpose he has been invested with full discretionary powers.' Abercromby had undertaken to put down the disturbances in a fortnight, and Clare wrote that if he did not do so, the King should disgrace him.[1]

The military were now ordered to act without waiting for directions from the civil magistrates, in dispersing tumultuous assemblies. Abercromby received express orders to disarm the rebels, to recover the arms that had been taken, and to crush rebellion, in whatever shape it might show itself, and wherever it might appear, by the most summary military measures; and a proclamation issued on March 30, established the most stringent martial law.[2] Of this proclamation, and of the measures that resulted from it, we shall learn more in the following chapter.

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[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 395–397. Cooke wrote very significantly: 'Sir Ralph . . . is gone into Munster with full martial law powers to quell the rebellion there, which is more dangerous to individuals than the State, for I think its breaking out will do good.' (Ibid. p. 400.)

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 164, 168, 169.

Abercromby agreed to act as the Government desired, but he at the same time, instead of waiting, as he ought to have done, till his resignation had been accepted by the King, at once informed his brother officers that he expected soon to be relieved. It became, therefore, well known that the military command was about to be changed, and that the Commander-in-Chief disapproved of the measures he was obliged to enforce. In the mean time, he issued instructions to the generals, directing them to disarm the people; authorising free quarters in disaffected districts, but also limiting and defining these measures, and taking every precaution that martial law should be exercised with leniency and moderation.[1]

In the opinion of Camden, he did not always execute his task judiciously. He was accused of refusing to consult with the country gentry, and treating those whom he met with marked coldness, and he appears to have greatly affronted Sir Lawrence Parsons, by his strictures on the King's County Militia.[2] He went through Kildare, the Queen's County, the King's County, Tipperary, and a considerable part of Munster, encountering little or no open opposition. The word had evidently gone forth that all should be quiet, and although Abercromby was not blind to the existence of deep-seated disaffection, he found the actual disturbances much exaggerated, and was more and more convinced of the impolicy of the steps which had been taken. There is, I think, little doubt, that he greatly underrated the extent of the conspiracy, and the real imminence of the danger. 'I had reason,' he wrote, 'from the proclamation and instructions I received, to believe that an in-

[1] Dunfermline's *Life of Abercromby*, pp. 116–121.

[2] Camden to Portland, April 23, 1798; *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 401.

surrection had taken place in the province of Munster. I have been through all the disaffected districts, and found nothing but tranquillity, the people employed in cultivating their lands, and following their usual avocations. They were civil and submissive, and although I never took any escort, or anything more than one servant, I was under no apprehension, even the most distant, of any danger. Several robberies have been committed, as has been, at all times, the custom in this country; some private quarrels have been avenged, and arms have been taken from the Protestants. The people, however, are induced to give them up partly through fear, partly through persuasion. I do not, however, doubt, that if an enemy should land, the Roman Catholics will rise, and cut the throats of the Protestants. I really think Lord Camden is ill advised to declare the kingdom in rebellion, and to establish something more than martial law over the whole kingdom. It was, perhaps, right to do something in that way, in some particular districts where the greatest outrages had been committed, and where the magistrates had fled from their duty. I am now convinced that a writ may be executed in any part of Ireland. Do not, therefore, be under any immediate apprehension about this country.'[1]

Abercromby is nearly the last figure of any real interest that, in the eighteenth century, flitted across the troubled scene of Irish politics. He left Ireland towards the end of April, just a month before the rebellion broke out, and he was replaced by Lake, who, more, perhaps, than any other military man, was associated with the abuses which Abercromby had tried to check. The reign of simple force was established beyond dispute, and the men whose policy had driven

[1] Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, pp. 127, 128.

Lord Fitzwilliam from Ireland, and Grattan from Parliament, were now omnipotent.

Abercromby himself in after years looked back on his brief Irish command as the most meritorious page of his long and brilliant career. After the scene of blood that was opening in Ireland had closed, and when the measure of a legislative Union was in contemplation, he wrote some melancholy lines, giving his impressions of Irish life. To the illiberal, the unjust, and the unwise conduct of England during the long period of her government, he mainly attributed the profoundly diseased character of Irish life. The Legislature and the Executive had become corrupt; the upper classes dissipated, neglectful of duty, and too often oppressive to the poor; the peasantry cunning, deceitful, lazy, and vindictive. 'Although,' he said, 'the French Revolution and Jacobin principles may be the immediate cause of the events which have lately taken place in Ireland, yet the remote and ultimate cause must be derived from its true origin, the oppression of centuries.' It will need a long period, and the wisest system of government that can be devised, to cure the evil. 'In the mean time you must trust to the due execution of the law, and to a powerful and well-disciplined army, for your protection. . . . Till a new system has begun to take effect, the Irish people will remain the tools of a foreign enemy, or of domestic agitators and demagogues. God grant that the measures on the affairs of Ireland, which they say are now under consideration, may be well weighed, and that the spirit of party may give way to true wisdom!'[1]

It will not be surprising to the reader, that everything of the nature of political concession was at this time obstinately refused, though representations often

[1] Dunfermline's *Abercromby*, pp. 127, 129, 130, 216.

came to the Government, pointing out its importance and its necessity. Pelham wrote from London, in the last days of 1797, that he found a strong disposition in English ministerial circles, to endeavour to alienate the Catholics from the conspiracy by some measures of concession, if the Irish Government would consent; and he begged Camden to consult with the Chancellor on the subject; but the answer was an absolute refusal.[1] Francis Higgins, the shrewd proprietor of the 'Freeman's Journal,' was at this time much about the Government, and gave them very valuable information. No one who was not himself a United Irishman knew better the movements and changes of popular Irish feeling, and he strongly urged the importance of doing something to conciliate the Catholics. He told them that there had been a meeting of United Irishmen, in which Emmet, Sampson, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and others, had expressed extreme alarm lest the Speech from the Throne should give hopes of a measure of Catholic emancipation, declaring that in that case 'there would be an end to freedom and their design.' In the opinion of Higgins, the wisest thing the Government could do, would be to enter on such a course, and especially to make use of the services of his illustrious friend Arthur O'Leary. 'I know,' he said, 'O'Leary would be a tower of strength among them. He was their first champion, and is most highly respected by the multitude. His writings and preaching prevented the Whiteboys and insurgents of the South from joining the rabble of Cork, and rising *en masse* at the period when the combined fleets of Spain, France &c. were in the English Channel.[2]

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[1] Pelham to Camden, Dec. 21; Camden to Pelham, Dec. 26, 1797.

[2] See the letters of F. H., Dec. 9, 22, 29, 1797; Jan. 2, 12, 16, 1798. The *Freeman's Jour-*

Another letter arrived, to which no great weight can have been attached, but which may be noticed in passing, as it is, I believe, with one exception, the last appearance in Irish politics of a strange, wild figure, which fills a considerable space in an earlier portion of this narrative. Lord Bristol, the Bishop of Derry, now lived entirely in Italy, from whence accounts of his mad pranks were from time to time brought back by travellers.[1] In the spring of 1797, his palace at Derry had been occupied by soldiers under Lord Cavan, and he wrote a furious letter, ordering that legal proceedings should be immediately taken against that officer.[2] In the beginning of 1798, Pelham received a long letter from him, dated from Venice, and giving his views of the state of Ireland. It is full of poetical quotations, and very extravagant in form, but not in substance. The diocese of Derry, he said, was the real centre of rebellion in Ireland, and the present was the third paroxysm which had taken place in the last thirty years. The Hearts of Oak, the Hearts of Steel, and the Defenders were all symptoms of the same deep-seated discontent and disease; and as he had gained the confidence of his turbulent people more completely than any other member of his cloth, he could tell the ministers confidently, that there were only two measures which could ever effect a real and radical cure. The first was, a complete change in the law of tithes. He described at length the hardship and irritation the existing system produced in Ulster, and continued: 'My remedy for all this evil is simple. I proposed it in 1774, and it was accepted by the Bench of Bishops assembled at the late Primate's, but—by way of experi-

nal wrote, on the whole, favourably towards the Catholics. See Madden's *History of Irish Periodical Literature*, ii. 480–482.

[1] See vol. ii. p. 429.

[2] Lord Cavan to Pelham, May 27, 1797.

ment—confined to the diocese of Derry; but my illness and other circumstances made me drop it. This was the remedy, grounded on the English statute for inclosing parishes, . . . an Act to enable every rector and vicar, with consent of the patron of the parish and the bishop of the diocese, to exchange his tithe, or any portion of his tithe, for land of the same value, so that the exchange will only be gradual in the parish.'

He explained the process by which such a measure could be made to work, but added that it must be accompanied by another great change, the payment of the priests and Dissenting ministers. The Presbyterians, who had a few years before, so enthusiastically supported the Bishop as the great champion of religious liberty, would have been somewhat startled had they seen the very plain language in which he now expressed his views on this subject. 'Is it not a shame that in any civilised country, and where there is an established religion as well as a Government, there should be teachers professedly paid by their hearers for preaching against both the one and the other? Neither Popish nor Presbyterian parson should, in my opinion, be permitted by law to preach or pray indoors but under the Great Seal of Ireland. The Crown should be the patron of all Dissenters, seceders, and schismatics whatever, and the Crown should either pay them, or be the cause of their being paid, and then Government would be certain of the people they appoint, and the doctrines they would teach.' The payment might be made either by a direct grant, or by a county or baronial rate, or by dividing the Church funds as livings became vacant. 'This would effectually tear up rebellion by the roots. . . . Where the treasure is, there would be the heart likewise. . . . Anything so anomalous as a man in a civilised state paid for preaching anarchy, confusion, and rebellion, I do not conceive.' Unless 'some radical

antidote' is very speedily applied to the diseased body politic, that body will infallibly burst.[1]

In the new Parliament also, which met on January 9, voices of protest and remonstrance were not wanting. I have already spoken of Lord Moira's motion in the House of Lords; and in the same House, Lord Bective, in a maiden speech, on the motion for the Address, strongly urged the necessity of conceding both parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation.[2] In the House of Commons, Sir Lawrence Parsons moved for a Committee of the House to inquire into the discontent of the nation, and he prefaced his motion by an elaborate and very powerful speech. He reminded the House that, at the time of Lord Fitzwilliam's recall, he had predicted, amid a storm of derision and dissent, that the effect of that fatal measure would be, that each gentleman's house would soon have to be protected by four or five soldiers, and he asked whether in very many cases this prediction had not proved literally true. To that recall; to the obstinate refusal of the Government to concede Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform; and to the settled design to divide and corrupt the country, he attributed, not indeed the existence of the United Irish conspiracy, but the immense success which had attended it. There were, however, other reasons. 'To make the people respect the laws, the Government should itself obey them. Such had not been the conduct of Government, and to that misconduct were the outrages and the assassinations which had disgraced the country to be traced. A general officer had in a western district taken out of the gaols a number of prisoners, whom the law would perhaps have pronounced innocent, and by his own

[1] Lord Bristol to Pelham, Jan. 16, 1798.

[2] Camden to Portland, Jan. 16, 1798.

authority transported them. A Bill of Indemnity was passed to protect this violation of law, and upon that Bill being debated, he well recollected an honourable gentleman [Mr. G. Ponsonby] observing, that by thus proving to the common people, that the law might be broken with impunity, by taking from them the resource of its protection, the practice of assassination would become as common in Ireland as it was in modern Rome; and that prediction had been unhappily fulfilled. Parliament went farther. In the Insurrection Bill, the conduct which had been thus indemnified, was made the law of the land, and it was notorious that almost every assassination which had taken place, had occurred in the districts in which that law had been enforced.' But Castlereagh, on the part of the Government, absolutely opposed all inquiry and all concession, and the House supported him by 156 to 19, and then carried an address to the Lord Lieutenant praising, in unqualified terms, the measures that had been pursued in Ulster, and asserting that they had been attended with complete success.[1]

Equally unsuccessful were the attempts of the Opposition to impose some restraint on military violence. Dr. Browne, one of the members for the University, asked 'by what authority, Act of Parliament, or proclamation, the house of every person was burned who was not at home at a particular hour at night;' and he asserted that there were many instances of persons who were supposed to be guilty of treasonable offences, but against whom there was no evidence, having been deliberately shot in cold blood. But the only answer he received was, that 'if some of the irregularities complained of had been committed, they were without the

[1] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 215–220; Camden to Portland, March 6, 1798.

sanction and approbation of the Government. The military had been moderate, and so had the Administration.'[1]

It is no doubt true that such acts of illegal military violence were usually provoked by great crimes, or by serious dangers, and that their number has been much exaggerated; but it is also true that the power of the Government was constantly employed to shelter them. In one case, a certain Colonel Sparrow, who was found guilty of having, without sufficient reason, killed a prisoner whose rescue he feared, and committed other acts of violence, produced the King's pardon immediately after the sentence was pronounced.[2] In the county of Kildare, there was a case, which is apparently well attested, of a respectable old man, who, intending to go on the morrow to Dublin, was mending his cart after sunset, in a district which was perfectly peaceful, and not included in the proclamation, when an officer of a Scotch fencible regiment, who had drunk too freely, mistaking either the district or the law, arrested him on the supposition that he was out of doors after the legal

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 340, 341. One of the members for the county of West Meath refused to attend the debate in which the military violence was discussed, and he gave Pelham an account of the state of his county, which seems to me very impartial. 'Great enormities, I do confess, were practised by the soldiery at the other side of this county, which I can by no means defend. Were I, therefore, in my place, my silence would be a sanction to the Opposition. . . . It may, perhaps, be some extenuation of these facts to state, that the most horrid barbarities had been previously practised by the insurgents, that witnesses had been cruelly murdered (one of them in open daylight), and that the minds of the soldiery had been exasperated by the recent fact of attacking twenty-four houses in one night, and almost in the same hour, which seemed to indicate a general rising. Other cruelties might be cited, such as the roasting of three women in one parish, to force them to confess where their money was deposited.' (Mr. Smyth, March 4, 1798.)

[2] Plowden, ii. 623.

hour. At the first turnpike, the officer got into an altercation with the turnpike keeper. While it was continuing, the prisoner endeavoured to return to his own home, but was at once cut down, killed and mangled with no less than sixteen wounds, nine of which were pronounced to be mortal. The coroner's inquest returned a verdict of wilful murder, but the military authorities refused to give up the culprit. The magistrate was driven back by force, and the Government refused to interfere. At last, when the scandal became very grave, the officer marched into Athy with a band playing before him, and gave himself up for trial. Toler, the Solicitor-General, was then acting as Judge of Assize, and in a charge, which appears to have been abundantly garnished with the judicial buffoonery for which, as Lord Norbury, he was afterwards so notorious, he directed the jury to acquit the prisoner, on the ground that 'he was a gallant officer, who had only made a mistake.'[1]

On a third occasion, twelve persons were released by the Court of King's Bench from an imprisonment which the judges pronounced entirely illegal.[2] Some persons, whose property had been destroyed in the search for arms, applied to the King's Bench for redress, and legal proceedings were instituted against some magistrates and yeomen.[3] But the Government interfered to obstruct the action of the law courts, and a

[1] See the account of this trial in Lord Cloncurry's *Personal Recollections*, pp. 49–51. Lord Cloncurry, then Mr. Lawless, was present at the trial, and the murdered man was a tenant of his father. McNally, referring to this case, wrote: 'The refusal of Mr. Pelham to give the aid of Government towards apprehending Lieutenant Fraser, of the Scotch Fencibles, is considered, or at least represented, as a gross instance of partiality and injustice, particularly as the inquest brought in a verdict of wilful murder.' 'The conduct of Toler on circuit,' he says in another letter, 'is the principal topic.' (J. W., July 24, Sept. 19, 1797.)

[2] Plowden, ii. 639, 640.

[3] Knox to Pelham, Nov. 29, 1797.

new Act of Indemnity was carried, which sheltered all magistrates, and other persons employed to preserve the peace, from the consequences of every illegal act they had committed since the beginning of the year 1797, with the object of suppressing insurrection, preserving peace, or securing the safety of the State.[1] The Opposition endeavoured to add a clause granting compensation to honest injured men whose property had been destroyed by such illegal violence, but this clause, though inspired by the most obvious and indisputable justice, was opposed and rejected.[2]

Such a policy could hardly fail to drive the country into rebellion, and to plant in it savage animosities and a distrust of law more dangerous, because more enduring, than rebellion. The efforts of the Opposition were hopeless, but not inglorious. The eloquent voices of Grattan, Ponsonby, and Curran were indeed no longer heard; but Parsons, Browne, and Knox maintained their cause with eminent ability, and they were reinforced by Lord Caulfield, the son of Charlemont; by Charles Kendall Bushe, one of the most graceful and attractive of speakers; and by another young lawyer of still higher powers, who was now brought into Parliament by Lord Charlemont, and who at once took his natural place among the very greatest of debaters. William Conyngham Plunket, the last of that remarkable group of statesmen and orators produced by the Irish Protestants in the closing half of the eighteenth century, can perhaps hardly be called a great man. He had neither the glow of imagination, nor the warmth and disinterestedness of character, that kindle the enthusiasm of nations. He has left no serious contribution to human thought or knowledge; and devoting himself mainly to professional ends, he neither sought nor won

[1] 37 Geo. III. c. 39.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 343.

the fame of a party leader or of a great legislator. Even as an orator—though his place is in the foremost rank—his popularity was somewhat limited by the extreme severity of a taste which rarely stooped to ornament, or indulged in anything that was merely rhetorical or declamatory. But in the power of rapid, lucid, and most cogent extemporaneous argument; in the grave, dignified, reasoned, and persuasive eloquence, which is most fitted to charm and subjugate an educated audience, he has very seldom had an equal, scarcely ever a superior.

As a politician, he belonged essentially to the school of Grattan, with whom he was linked in the closest friendship, whom he succeeded in the conduct of the Catholic question in the Imperial Parliament, and of whom he was accustomed to speak to the end of his long life as the greatest and best man he had ever known. He agreed with Grattan in his hostility to the Union and in his views on the Catholic question, and he equally agreed with him in his detestation of the United Irish conspiracy; in his dislike and distrust of the democratic character which O'Connell afterwards gave to Irish politics; in his freedom from all French sympathies; in his genuine hatred of anarchy and disorder. In the Imperial Parliament he was at once recognised as one of the very greatest of orators and debaters,[1] but he confined himself to a few questions, and was never a keen party politician. The affinity of

[1] I may here mention, that Lord Russell once told me that, looking back on his long life, he considered that there were two men in his early days, who excelled as orators any in the generation that succeeded them. They were Canning and Plunket; and of these two, he considered Plunket the greater. There is an admirable description of Plunket's speaking in Bulwer's *St. Stephen's*, part 3. See, too, much on the subject which is collected in Plunket's *Life*, by his distinguished grandson, the member for Dublin University.

his intellect and character drew him naturally to the moderate Whigs who followed Lord Grenville, and like most of Lord Grenville's followers he joined the Government of Lord Liverpool in 1821, and supported the liberalised Toryism of Canning. On two memorable occasions, he separated himself from the bulk of those with whom he usually acted. In 1815, when the great body of the Whig party were prepared to sacrifice the fruits of twenty years' war by acquiescing in the restoration of Napoleon, Plunket, with Grattan and with Lord Grenville, strenuously advocated the renewal of the war, and in 1819 he surprised many of his friends by maintaining the necessity of the six Acts of Castlereagh. In the session of 1798, his main object seems to have been to restrain illegal violence, and he was the proposer of the clause for granting compensation to the innocent victims of military violence.

The discontent produced by the refusal of the Irish Parliament to grant any measure of redress or of reform, was seriously increased by the renewed rejection of the absentee tax. The arguments, both of principle and policy, which Burke had urged against this tax, were very powerful, and in ordinary times they might have been accepted as conclusive, but Ireland was now struggling with no ordinary difficulties. It was scarcely possible that any small and poor country could bear, for many successive years, the financial strain of such a war as that which was now raging. England herself staggered under the burden, and seemed to many good judges on the verge of bankruptcy; and in Ireland the situation was aggravated by the necessity of immense military preparations to maintain the Government at home, and by the collapse of credit and paralysis of industry that always follow extreme anarchy and imminent danger of invasion and rebellion. I have described the excellent financial condition of Ireland when the

war began, and the very moderate and equitable taxation imposed by the Irish Parliament. But in 1797, the fifth year of the war, the condition of affairs had become very serious.

The Government deemed it necessary to raise nearly four millions by loan, and they found the operation exceedingly difficult. They were obliged to issue five per cent. 100*l.* debentures at 63, and they obtained with some difficulty a loan of a million and a half from England.[1] It was no longer possible to exempt the poor from taxation, and the salt tax and the leather tax fell upon them with great severity. Some of the principal articles of Irish manufacture, it is true, still showed a surprising vitality, and high prices gave prosperity to agriculture, but those prices greatly aggravated the distress of large classes, and it was stated that in 1797 there were no less than 37,000 persons in Dublin alone, in a state of extreme destitution.[2]

Under these circumstances, and at a time when the poor were suffering so severely, the exemption of the great absentee proprietors from all taxation for Irish purposes seemed peculiarly unjust. Another year of war was now opening; there was no prospect of returning peace, and it was certain that new sacrifices would be required. The tax was proposed by La Touche, the principal banker, and one of the most respected characters in Dublin, but he desisted, when he found the Government inflexibly opposed to it. It was then taken up again by Vandeleur, and it was defeated by 104 to 40. In this case, the real opposition came not from Ireland, but from England, and Portland gave the Lord Lieutenant peremptory orders that the tax must be rejected. 'It is impossible,' writes Camden, 'to

[1] See the financial debates in *Irish Parl. Deb.* xvii. part 2. Adolphus's *History of England*, vi. 547, 548.

[2] Plowden, ii. 644.

describe the ill humour which pervades all descriptions of persons, from finding Government determined to oppose this measure. It will, however, I trust, be defeated by a larger majority than your grace might have supposed; but I must repeat the great disgust with which most of the friends of Government support it upon the present occasion.'[1]

This session of Parliament did nothing to quiet the country, and nothing to regain the affections of the people, and the shadow of great coming calamity fell darkly on the land. In Ulster, it is true, there was a sudden, mysterious, perplexing calm. Cooke wrote to England in March, that, although the leading agitators were still busy there, the lower classes were at work, and peaceable and industrious, and he added, 'I believe no part of the King's dominions more apparently quiet, or more evidently flourishing, than the North of Ireland.'[2] Clare, as we have seen, boasted of it in the House of Lords, as a clear proof of the success of martial law. Lake wrote from Belfast: 'The natives continue quiet, waiting with anxious expectation for the arrival of the French, which, they are taught to believe, will happen very shortly; their dispositions remain precisely the same. The flame is smothered, but not extinguished.'[3] Others believed that the very calm of Ulster was an evil sign, for it only showed how perfectly the people were organised, how fully they obeyed the order to remain passive till the French invasion, which was confidently expected in the early spring. But over a great part of Leinster and Munster, horrible murders were of almost daily occurrence,[4] and an ex-

[1] Portland to Camden, Jan. 29; Camden to Portland, Feb. 5, 15, 23, 1798.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 392.

[3] Lake to Pelham, Jan. 27, 1798.

[4] *Beresford's Correspondence*, ii. 154; Musgrave's *Rebellions in Ireland*, pp. 196, 197, 203.

treme terror prevailed. Lord Longueville, writing from the county Cork, to report the murder of Sir Henry Merrick, said that Abercromby's order forbidding the military to act without the presence of a magistrate, would be fatal, as the magistrates would not dare to expose themselves to the lasting vengeance that would pursue them, and he mentioned that, in a single week, three men had been shot in clear daylight, within eight miles of his own house.[1] Even the sentinels on guard in Dublin were frequently fired at.[2] Dr. Lanigan, the Catholic Bishop of Ossory, wrote in March to Archbishop Troy, describing the condition of the Queen's County, and some charges that had been brought against the priests, and his letter contains this very significant sentence: 'The priests told me, and I believe them, that the fear of assassination prevents them from speaking as much as they wished against United Irishmen.'[3]

In the towns, the United Irish ranks were rapidly recruiting. McNally writes that men in respectable and independent positions, and even 'of considerable property,' were 'daily Uniting;' that the conspiracy was making rapid progress in the public offices, and among the yeomen; that nearly all the clerks in banks and great merchant and trading houses were involved in it; that there was hardly a house with three men servants which had not a domiciliary committee; that the United Irishmen had already their agents and their spies in the most confidential departments of the Castle and the law courts, and that they were actively introducing them into the post offices.[4] In Trinity College, seditious

[1] Lord Longueville, March 8, 1798.

[2] Musgrave, p. 203.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 160–162.

[4] See the letters of J. W. for Feb. and March 1798. An Athlone magistrate, named Parker, wrote that he had been sending a confidential agent to attend a

sentiments were spreading among the young men, and a visitation was held by the Vice-Chancellor Lord Clare, and by Dr. Duigenan, who was deputed to act in the place of the Archbishop of Dublin. Several students were expelled, and among those who were examined was young Thomas Moore, who has left a graphic description of the scene.[1] An informer wrote, that the leaders of the conspiracy believed that the expulsions from Trinity College would have the happiest effect on their cause, and that it was 'a master stroke to have thus committed the Government with the youth of the country.'[2]

Printed papers were now widely circulating, warning the people to be prepared, and telling them that the moment of deliverance was at hand, when all their troubles would be over. Itinerant pedlars were going to and fro, busily spreading the contagion. A translation of a tract by Volney, called 'The Torch,' was widely distributed. Women, paid by the United Irishmen, went through every town and village, singing seditious songs. There were handbills, exhorting the people to abstain from spirituous liquors, partly in order to starve the revenue but chiefly in order to diminish the danger of the betrayal of secret designs, and a marked diminution of drunkenness is said to have followed. Other handbills forbade the people to purchase the quit rents of the Crown, which were being sold to

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mendicant friar in his annual circuit through a great part of the co. Roscommon, and that he found that nearly all the servants in gentlemen's houses were disaffected, and acquainted with the Defenders' signs. (T. Parker, April 6, 1798.)

[1] See the preface to the Irish Melodies in the Collected Edition of *Moore's Works*; and also Camden to Portland, March 6, 1798. Many particulars about this visitation, and about the spread of disaffection in Trinity College, will be found in Stubbs' *History of the University of Dublin*, pp. 294–299.

[2] Mag. [Magan], April 22, 1798.

raise supplies, and recommended them to refuse all paper money in their commercial dealings. There were, at the same time, incessant efforts to seduce the soldiers, the militiamen, and the yeomen.[1]

It was a state of society in which no man knew whom he could trust, or what was the true extent of the danger, and panic and passion were steadily increasing. Camden was honest and humane, but weak, incapable, bewildered, and utterly desponding. 'Your grace can hardly conceive,' he wrote, 'the timidity which prevails in many parts of the country, and the intemperance which is felt and expressed by the friends of Government in Dublin. It is as difficult to repress the zealous, as to give courage to the timid.' 'A jealousy of English influence; a nonsensical and short-sighted pride of independence; religious differences; carelessness towards their inferiors, which, in the higher classes, is general; cruelty towards them, which is too frequent amongst some of them; the want of parochial communication; the non-residence of the clergy of the Established Church, and the influence acquired by a discontented and, frequently, a seditious priest, render this kingdom peculiarly adapted to receive the impressions it has done,' and the success of the French Revolution had kindled the discontent into a flame. The kingdom was becoming more and more disturbed. In Kildare, very lately, two magistrates were shot in broad daylight, and not one of the labourers who were standing near made a single effort to arrest the murderers. In the Queen's County, which had lately been very peaceful and prosperous, and which contained a large resident gentry, houses were now being continually

[1] February, March, and April letters, I.S.P.O.; *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, i. 13, 14; *Report of the Secret Committee*, Appendix, No. xxviii.

broken open and plundered, and outrages and murders were multiplying. 'Add to this, most extravagant party prejudices. The eager Protestants, calling the present conspiracy a Popish plot, and indulging in language and in conduct revolting to the Catholics, are encouraging the Orangemen, avowing themselves of their society, and averring that until the penal laws against the Catholics are again enacted, the country cannot be safe.' Grants of 25*l.* a year to 200 students at Maynooth, had lately been carried by the Government, against the opinion of the Speaker and of several other of their usual supporters; yet it was noticed, with some bitterness, that when, soon after, there was a proposal before the Bank of Ireland, for granting a sum of money for the prosecution of the war, not one Roman Catholic among the Bank proprietors voted for it, and that the minority who opposed it consisted almost entirely of Roman Catholics.[1] In a letter written a few weeks later, to announce and justify the proclamation of military law, Camden speaks of innumerable houses plundered of arms; attacks on villages in noonday; yeomen disarmed by night; loyalists driven in multitudes from their homes.[2]

We have seen that Abercromby, while acting in obedience to the Government, believed that there was no small measure of exaggeration in such descriptions of the country. Other accounts, however, which were even more highly coloured, came to England from the great placemen and borough-owners, who were the real governors of Ireland, and they were no doubt intended to be laid before Pitt, if not before the King. Of these men, Beresford was perhaps the most powerful, and also the most violent. 'The country,' he wrote to Auckland, 'is in a desperate state; the seeds of rebellion

[1] Camden to Portland, March 6, 1798. [2] Ibid. March 30, 1798.

are sown far and wide, and the Irish Directory have now so organised every part of the kingdom, that they can make them rise when they please. In Munster, Leinster, and Connaught, it is a Popish plot; in Ulster, a Presbyterian plot; but in each case the end is the same—a separation from Great Britain, and a republican government. The Popish and Presbyterian clergy are deep in the business, and the former have actually persuaded the people in Munster, that their salvation depends upon murdering and massacring every person who stands in their way; and they have established such a system of terror, that it is with the greatest difficulty any magistrate can be got to act, or any witness to come forward. They murder every man whom they suspect, in the slightest manner, to be inclined to give evidence against them.'

To such a state of society, Beresford contended that Lord Moira's system of conciliation, and Sir Ralph Abercromby's system of leniency, were utterly unsuited. The rebels 'show us how they think they can carry their point, viz. by terror; and that points out to us how to counteract them, and experience in the North confirms the fact. The people are persuaded that everything they have obtained has been given them through fear, and that it is fear of them alone, which prevents us from taking the same measures in the other three provinces which were taken in Ulster—that was forcing them to give up the arms they had plundered . . . by threatening to throw down or burn their houses and destroy their property; that stopped them at once, without the necessity of destroying more than a dozen houses. They had destroyed ten times as many, and had plundered innumerable others, and murdered many persons, and continued to do so until they found retaliation begin, when they stopped directly. They are now in Leinster, Munster, and Connaught, plundering and

burning houses, murdering witnesses and magistrates . . . and in the middle of the noonday, in the streets of towns, obliging, by force and threats, men to take their oaths and pay contributions for their plans. . . . They murder people merely for the purpose of keeping up their system of terror. We are thus deprived of witnesses; we see and know everything that is doing, but cannot bring legal evidence to convict these people. . . . If in such circumstances we should use the power which the law gives us to counteract such outrages by the military—even if we did in some instances exceed the law—it is probable that a dozen acts of severity may have happened on our side—how many hundreds have been performed by the rebels? . . . How many of the military have been shot within six months, and not one of their murderers brought to punishment?'[1]

We have had much evidence, in the course of the present work, that the political sentiments of the main body of the Irish gentry differed widely from those of the great borough-owners who controlled the Parliament; that they viewed with impatience and disgust the prevailing system of corrupt monopoly, and that up to the date of the outbreak of the war, and even up to the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, they would have gladly accepted Grattan's policy of a moderate reform, and an abolition of the chief remaining religious disqualifications. Their sentiments, however, were now materially changed. A considerable but much diminished body still followed Grattan. Some were in sympathy with the United Irishmen, and looked forward either with

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 401-405. This letter was written April 10. In a letter written a month later, he says: 'At present the quiet which appears in certain parts is deceptive. Where the country is organised, quiet appears. Where the organisation is going on, there is disturbance. It appears in Kildare there are complete regiments.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 412.)

hope or with acquiescence to a separate republic; others, panic-stricken by the turn which events had taken, both in France and Ireland, had lost all faith in reform, and had convinced themselves that there was no longer any prospect of a popular Government in Ireland, consistently with the maintenance of order and the security of property, while a few had begun to look forward to a legislative Union as the only possible solution. A curious incident, which has never been related, but which at this time greatly occupied the Government, throws some light upon this subject, and at the same time brings into clearer relief the character and opinions of a remarkable man, with whom we have been already concerned.

Among the suspected persons in England was a gentleman named Bell, who was known to be on intimate terms with Arthur O'Connor. His letters were seized or intercepted, and the Duke of Portland was startled to find among them a correspondence from General Knox. The letters are not disclosed, but they showed that Knox was a warm friend both of Bell and of Arthur O'Connor; and it is evident from the description of them that he had written with perfect candour, and had expressed very fully his contempt for the men and the system of government that prevailed in Ireland. Knox, from his connections, his abilities, and his military command, was one of the most important persons in Ulster. He had been largely employed by the Government in drawing up plans for the defence of the province, and we have seen, from his letters to Pelham, how intimate he at one time was with the Chief Secretary, and how ready he was to counsel the most drastic measures of repression. Portland asked with dismay, whether this distinguished general was among the traitors?[1]

[1] Portland to Camden, March 7. 1798.

Camden wrote two letters on the subject, which appear to me very interesting and significant, and quite consistent with the letters of Knox, which the reader has already perused. He in the first place expressed, in the strongest terms, his perfect confidence in the integrity of Knox, and he desired that the discovery of the correspondence should be most carefully concealed, lest any breath of suspicion should attach to him. Knox, he said, was a very able and honest officer, of great influence in the North, and of the highest personal honour; but he was 'a man of speculative and capricious independency;' of 'a busy speculative mind;' indiscreet, and apt to communicate his ideas much too freely. Camden then adds some general remarks, which, when due allowance is made for the point of view from which he naturally wrote, are not a little instructive. 'I know that at the beginning of the French Revolution there was much free and theoretic speculation here, not only on general political topics, but particularly on the state and relative situation of Ireland, and I am confident that if the French Revolution had taken a humane and genial turn, and had not degenerated into such a rapid succession of tyranny upon tyranny, the speculative minds among the educated and superior classes of this kingdom would have hearkened eagerly to democratic novelties. It is the failure of the French Revolution to produce happiness which has generated opposition to it here.' There was, however, another cause which had been lately changing the sentiments of the educated and propertied classes in Ireland. 'The great point which General Knox broadly states, that a revolution here would give the power of the country to the descendants of the ancient Irish, and destroy every vestige of British settlement, begins to open itself to all of English origin.' The opinions expressed by Knox, were not new or surprising to the Lord Lieutenant.

'He has often mentioned the decidedly mean opinion he has of the aristocracy of this country, and the necessity of such an Union of the two kingdoms, as would correct the flightiness of Ireland by the introduction of English sobriety.'[1]

Amid the blinding mists of passion, prejudice, and exaggeration that sweep over this dismal period of Irish history, one great change may be distinctly discerned. The movement which owed its origin in a great measure to the decline of theological fanaticism, which was chiefly originated by Protestants and freethinkers, and which aimed at the political union of Irishmen of all religious denominations, was gradually turning into a religious war; reviving fierce religious passions which had been for generations subsiding, and which had at last become almost dormant. Beresford spoke of Ireland as suffering from a Presbyterian plot, and also from a Popish plot, but it was not possible that two such plots could co-exist in alliance, though it was quite possible that members of the two denominations might be blended in one political conspiracy. I have traced the beginning of the change which was taking place—the rise and rapid extension of the Orange movement; the attempts of some conspicuous loyalists to organise it for the defence of the country; the partial alliance between it and the Government; the persistent efforts of the United Irishmen to goad the Catholic masses into rebellion, by representing the Orange society as a conspiracy to massacre them, and by representing the English Government as supporting it. The United Irish conspiracy when it passed into a perfectly ignorant Catholic population at once changed its character, and

[1] Camden to Portland (private), March 10, 19, 1798. There is also a letter on this subject from Wickham to Cooke, March 26, 1798. The reader may find some additional particulars about General Knox in Richardson's *History of the Irish Yeomanry* (1806).

its original political objects almost disappeared. 'The Popish spirit,' wrote Cooke, 'has been set up against the Protestants, by reporting every Protestant to be an Orangeman, and by inculcating that every Orangeman has sworn to exterminate the Papists; to these fictions are added the real pressure of high rents from the undertakers of land, and high tithes from tithe proctors.'[1] Fanaticism was rapidly rising, and it was rising on both sides. 'The most alarming feature of the movement,' Camden wrote in April, is 'the appearance of the present contest becoming a religious one.'[2] Loyalty in Ireland was beginning more and more to rally round the Orange standard, and to derive a new energy and courage from religious passion. At the same time, the essentially Popish character which the revolution was assuming in Leinster and Munster, had begun to shake the confidence of the conspirators in Ulster.

In a letter written a few weeks before the proclamation of martial law, Camden described the terror which the frequent murders were producing among the loyal classes, and expressed great fear that the juries in the approaching assizes would not have the courage to do their duty.[3] It is possible that the proclamation may have done something to check the panic, but it is at least certain that this foreboding was somewhat signally falsified. The spring assizes, which immediately preceded the outbreak of the rebellion, were, on the whole, very satisfactory, and their character was scarcely consistent with the representations that had been made of the state of the country. Camden at this time summed up in a few lines the condition of a great part of Ireland. In the King's County there were more signs of repentance than anywhere else in the South.

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[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 392.
[2] Camden to Portland. April 23, 1798. [3] Ibid. March 11, 1798.

One hundred pikes had been given up, and there were many convictions at the assizes. In Tipperary there was more open rebellion than in other counties, but the outrages were now somewhat checked, though the progress towards quiet was slow. 'At the assizes which were held in Kildare, the juries in general did their duty; but there appeared no good disposition among the Catholics, as I am informed, during the trials, and it was reported to me that those juries who did not act with propriety were of that persuasion.' The Queen's County had been 'harassed with constant nocturnal pillage and many murders.' 'The assizes in this county were remarkably well attended, and if any fault is to be found in the administration of justice there, it is that the juries were almost too anxious to convict. Many very desperate villains were condemned and executed.' 'From the counties of Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Carlow, Kilkenny, Meath and West Meath, all of which have been disturbed, I hear the most satisfactory accounts from the judges, of the behaviour of the juries.' The accounts from the North were also good, but Camden was not sanguine that there was a real political improvement, and he knew from secret intelligence that many and dangerous agitators were abroad. At the same time, he wrote: 'Your grace ought to be informed that the general observation of those who have gone that circuit [Ulster], as well as other well-informed men, is, that a much better spirit pervades it. Industry is restored; trade is flourishing; there are great quantities of linen on their bleach greens, which was not the case last year, no outrages, and apparent content, and the judges and bar all declare that they never remember so much civil and so little criminal business upon that circuit.' In Connaught there were some disquieting signs. 'Very suspicious appearances were observed in the county of Galway, and I cannot do the gentlemen

of that county too much justice. Upon the first rumour of the possibility of disturbance, they repaired to their houses. All sects and all religions united themselves, and have checked completely the system. . . . Mayo has been disturbed only in a trifling degree, and the rest of Connaught is yet quiet.'[1]

Other letters from different sources corroborate the statement, that the juries over a great part of Ireland no longer feared to convict, and that many of the worst criminals were detected and punished.[2] I must not, however, omit to mention, that there is painful evidence that in at least one county, Orange fanaticism, and the blind passion and resentment produced by a long course of outrages, had begun to invade the law courts. The reader will have noticed a significant sentence in the letter of Lord Camden, which has been just quoted, relating to the Queen's County. This county had usually been one of the most prosperous, peaceful, and apparently best administered in Ireland, and it contained a large resident gentry, but for several weeks parties of savage banditti had been ranging through it by night, attacking and plundering houses, and committing many murders. McNally, though secretly in the pay of the Government, was the favourite advocate of the prisoners, and he wrote from Maryborough an earnest remonstrance to Cooke about the manner in which the trials in this county were conducted.

He wrote, he said, in court, with the shrieks of men, women, and children sounding in his ears. 'Thirteen

[1] Camden to Portland, April 23, 1798.

[2] See the statements of Cooke and Beresford (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 392, 401.) Beresford says: 'Our gentry have acted well this assizes, . . . and I must say the Roman Catholics of property who have been on the juries have done their duty. There was but one man escaped as yet, who, in my opinion, ought not, and that by direction of the judge.'

men have received sentence of death—a sight most piteous, however just, and two of them are to die on Monday. . . . In my opinion, many of the convictions were not so much owing to conclusive evidence, as promptitude of juries, determined on making examples; for the defences set up by the prisoners were treated too often with inattention, laughter, and contempt; everything against them received as truth. In some cases the judge's authority could scarcely preserve the decorum necessary to a court of justice, and this conduct was severely felt, and bitterly complained of by the lower people to those in whom they could confide. I apprehend it has instilled more resentment than terror, and that they consider the sufferers under sentence, objects of vengeance rather than of justice.' In the Queen's County, McNally says, 'the plan of insurrection' was rather of the Defender than of the United Irishman type, though the latter—which was politically by far the more dangerous—would probably follow; and the fact that there was no subscription for lawyers to defend the prisoners, proved to him that the northern organisation did not yet exist. He added: 'The landed men in this county are strongly connected. In my judgment, they have strength and influence sufficient to quiet the people. Yet I never knew a peasantry bear a more inveterate antipathy to their superiors, owing, as I understand, to great oppressions under which many of them suffer; but I do not say this is general. I observe that in this county, the distinction between Protestant and Papist is more inveterately and invidiously kept up than in any other place. Some gentlemen of fortune wore orange ribands, and some barristers sported orange rings with emblems. Such ensigns of enmity, I assure you, are not conducive to conciliation. Are they necessary to any good purpose? On several of the trials the witnesses were Roman Catholics, and a family of

that persuasion beat and apprehended the leader of a most dangerous gang.' [1]

I will conclude this chapter by a few remarks illustrating the designs and the secret dispositions of the English Government towards Ireland at the eve of the rebellion. There is, I believe, no evidence that they at this time contemplated a legislative Union as likely to be introduced in the immediate future, or even that they had formed any fixed determination that the existing Parliament was to be the last in Ireland. It is indeed abundantly evident, that they looked forward to an Union as the ultimate solution of the Irish question; that with this view they were determined, in accordance with the Irish Government, to maintain unaltered the borough system, which made the Irish Legislature completely subservient to the Executive; and that they wished Catholic emancipation, as well as parliamentary reform, to be adjourned till an Union had been carried. But in none of the confidential correspondence which took place at the time of the election for the Parliament which met at the beginning of 1798, is there, as far as I am aware, any mention of a legislative Union; no opinion appears to have been as yet formed about the time or circumstances of introducing it, and beyond the lines that I have indicated, it is not, I think, true, that English Ministers were directing Irish policy with that object. In general, they allowed the administration of Ireland to be almost wholly shaped by the Irish Government; and even when they interfered with advice, they did so with little energy or persistence. When Fox and Lord Moira introduced into the British Parliament a discussion upon the military outrages, the ministers replied that those matters were within the sole competence of the Irish Parliament and Government. If they

[1] J. W. (Maryborough), April 8, 1798.

resented Sir Ralph Abercromby's order, it was because it was certain to furnish a formidable weapon to the English Opposition; if they opposed an absentee tax, it was chiefly because it would affect men who had great political influence in England. They assisted the Irish Government, by intercepting the correspondence of suspected rebels, and by collecting evidence through confidential agents on the Continent, and they more than once assisted it by loans in the great financial crisis of the war. On the other hand, they insisted that a considerable though much diminished number of lucrative Irish posts should be bestowed on Englishmen, and they wished to make the Irish peerage in some measure a reward for English services. For the rest, they only asked that Ireland should not be an embarrassment; that England should derive trade advantages from her connection with her, and that Ireland should contribute larger forces to carry on the war, than were needed for keeping her in her allegiance.

The advice of the English Government was usually in the direction of moderation, and especially in the sense of conciliating the Catholics. To separate as much as possible the Catholics from the Dissenters, and the Catholic question from the question of reform, was for some considerable time the keynote of the Irish policy of Portland. He was much struck with the fact that Protestant Ulster was the most disaffected of the four provinces; that at least five-sixths of the leaders of the United Irishmen were Protestants; that Munster, though now profoundly disturbed, had shown itself perfectly loyal during the French expedition at the end of 1796; that Connaught, the most purely Catholic province in Ireland, was the one province which was still almost untainted. He believed with good reason that the genius of the Catholic Church was essentially opposed to the revolutionary spirit, and that the higher

clergy, at least, were sincere in their hostility to it, and he probably hoped that the influence of the Papacy might contribute something to the peace of Ireland.

The great French war which was raging, had among its other consequences produced, for the first time since the Revolution of 1688, a close and friendly communication between the English Government and the Vatican. In 1794 the 12th Lancers had gone from Corsica to Civita Vecchia, where they remained for three months, mounted guard, and discharged other garrison duty. Their officers were presented to Pius VI., who took one of their helmets in his hands and blessed it, and who on the departure of the regiment gave each commissioned officer a gold medal, and each non-commissioned officer a silver one, as an expression of his gratitude for the excellent behaviour of the English troops.[1] Lord Hood's fleet, when excluded from the other ports in the Mediterranean, was, with the approval of the Pope, provisioned in the Papal dominions.[2] Burke at this time strongly urged the policy of establishing a formal diplomatic connection with Rome. 'I would,' he wrote, 'if the matter rested with me, enter into much more distinct and avowed political connections with the Court of Rome, than hitherto we have held. If we decline them, the bigotry will be on our part, and not on that of his Holiness. Some mischief has happened, and

[1] See Cannon's *Historical Records of the British Army*, 12th Royal Lancers, p. 19. Sir J. Hippisley, *Substance of Additional Observations intended to have been delivered in the House of Commons on May* 13 *or* 14, 1805, pp. 93, 94; Hippisley's *Statement of Facts presented to Pius VII.* pp. 73, 74; Bullen's *Historical Outlines of Political Catholicism*, pp. 92, 93. In 1799 British sailors cleared the Papal dominions of their enemies the French, and British marines were sentries at Rome till the evacuation by the French.

[2] Sir J. Hippisley, *Substance of a Speech on the Motion of the Right Hon. H. Grattan*, April 24, 1812 (with appendix), pp. 102–104.

much good has, I am convinced, been prevented, by our unnatural alienation.'[1]

The English Ministers were not prepared to face the outcry which might have followed such a step, and it was still forbidden under an unrepealed statute of Elizabeth; but it is a remarkable and little known fact, that in the reign of George III. a real though unofficial diplomatic connection subsisted for some years between London and the Vatican. The English representative was Mr.—afterwards Sir John—Hippisley, who had been attached to the embassy at Naples, and who negotiated at Rome, not only on the common interests of the two Powers in their struggle with France, but also on various matters connected with the interests of the Catholic subjects of the King. The regulation of the Catholic churches in Corsica and Minorca; the appointment of a bishop in St. Domingo, and the nomination of the superiors of the British and Irish seminaries at Rome, were all made matters of very amicable arrangement, and Hippisley succeeded in obtaining from Cardinal Antonelli an assurance, that no friar should in future be appointed to the Irish episcopacy.[2] His position was clearly recognised in letters of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, and of the Congregation of State;[3] and on his recommendation, the Pope in 1793

[1] This letter was written Oct. 10, 1793, to Hippisley. See his *Substance of Additional Observations*, pp. 94, 95.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 82, 83, 89, 92, 117; Hippisley's *Substance of a Speech, May* 18, 1810, pp. 24, 25; Hippisley's *Letters to Lord Fingall*, pp. 68. 69; *Statement of Facts presented to Pius VII.* (1818), pp. 66, 67.

[3] Hippisley's *Statement of Facts presented to Pius VII.* (1818), p. 68. Hippisley adds: 'After two centuries and a half, during which no political or ecclesiastical intercourse between the two Courts was permitted, or at least avowed, with an exception to a few letters which had passed between the Cardinals de la Lanze and Buoncompagni, and the late Mr. Dutens, at that time appointed Secretary of Embassy to the Court of Spain, Sir J. H. had the gratification of

sent over to London, Monsignor Erskine, a member of the great Scotch family of Mar, and the grandson of an Earl of Kellie, as resident at the Court of England. Erskine was not of course officially recognised, and his mission was not generally known, but he was frequently received at Court; he had many interviews with Pitt and with the King, and he resided in London for no less than eight years.[1] Bishop Douglas, the Catholic prelate who presided over the London district, had previously held confidential communications with Lord Grenville;[2] and Hippisley, after his return to England, was much employed in negotiating with the Irish prelates. Catholic chaplains were appointed, under the royal sign-manual, for the new Franco-Irish brigade in the English service.[3] At the suggestion of Hippisley, the Irish prelates introduced into the ordinary catechism employed in Ireland, some additional clauses, enforcing the duty of obedience to the civil power.[4] In the

finding that, through his own instrumentality, this state of estrangement was interrupted and an intercourse revived. . . . He had also the gratification of having his conduct on that occasion distinctly approved, both by the Government of his own country and that of his Holiness.' The earlier communications referred to in this passage, were in 1777 and 1786. Hippisley's pamphlets, and his letters in the third volume of the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, throw much light on this curious page of eighteenth-century history.

[1] From November 1793 to December 1801. Several particulars about Monsignor Erskine and his mission will be found in Moroni, *Dizionario Ecclesiastico*, tome xxii. (Erskine). See, too, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 87, 88. The fullest account, however, will be found in some interesting diaries and memoirs published from MSS. at Rome, by Mr. Maziere Brady in his *Anglo-Roman Papers* (1890). It appears that when Erskine's Roman revenues were stopped through the occupation of the Papal States by the French in 1798, he was provisionally pensioned by George III. Erskine was made a cardinal in 1801.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 88.

[3] Hippisley's *Statement*, p. 126; *Supplementary Note*, p. 66.

[4] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 134–136.

Canadian Catholic Church, the King seems to have virtually possessed the nomination of the bishops;[1] and when the Cardinal of York, the last direct heir of the Stuarts, was plundered by the French, he was relieved by a liberal pension from George III.[2]

All these things show the very friendly relations that subsisted between the Vatican and the Court of St. James, in spite of the strong sentiments of George III. about Catholic emancipation. The English Ministers saw in this good understanding, a powerful instrument for one day pacifying Ireland. Archbishop Troy appears at this time to have been much suspected by the Irish Government, and his letters were opened at the Post Office. Among them was found one from Monsignor Erskine, urging the Archbishop 'to prevail on his brethren and his flock, to exert themselves on behalf of the law and Government.' Camden communicated this gratifying fact to Portland, but he found that Portland was already aware of it, for Monsignor Erskine had been in communication with the ministers, and had informed them of what he had written.[3] In reply to one of the letters that have been quoted, Portland wrote that, 'notwithstanding the very unpromising return which was made by the Catholic proprietors of the Bank to the liberality which the Parliament has manifested in the course of the session to the Seminary of Maynooth, the meritorious and exemplary conduct of the whole province of Connaught' induced him to recur to a suggestion which he had before made, that it would be in a high degree useful to the State, to make a provision for the Catholic clergy.[4] In another letter he wrote, that he had been informed of 'the spoliation

[1] Hippisley's *Letters to Lord Fingall*, p. 68.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 332; iii. 14–16, 385, 386.

[3] Portland to Camden, April 20, 1798. Camden called Erskine the Pope's Nuncio.

[4] Ibid. March 20, 1798.

and sacrilege which had been committed in several of the Roman Catholic chapels, for the express purpose,' as he believed, 'of exasperating the lower orders of these people against the present Establishment of Government;' and he suggested that the Irish Government should offer rewards for the discovery of the perpetrators of such outrages.'[1] At the same time, he desired to encourage, as much as possible, all voluntary loyalist efforts in Ireland, even when they assumed an ultra-Protestant character. From two quarters, he said, he had heard 'that an association is formed by the Orangemen of Ulster, which consists already of 170,000 persons, and has been joined by all the principal gentry and well-affected persons of property in that province, for the purpose of protecting themselves against the combinations which have been formed by the United Irishmen;' and he added, 'It seems to me, that such a proof of energy on the part of the country, would be likely to do more than all the military force you could apply.'[2]

There is nothing said in the replies of Lord Camden, about the spoliation of Catholic chapels, and the letter of the Duke of Portland is, as far as I know, the earliest allusion to the revival of a form of outrage which, a few weeks later, became common.[3] The policy of paying the priests, though a profoundly wise one,[4]

[1] Portland to Camden, April 2, 1798.

[2] Ibid. March 24, 1798.

[3] I have already mentioned that it was one of the Peep of Day Boy outrages.

[4] McNally, in a letter dated Sept. 22, 1802, gives the outline of a very elaborate and skilfully devised plan for paying the priests, which he had drawn up and submitted to the Government several years before the rebellion. He says that at that time he took great pains to ascertain the sentiments of the priests, and that he found the secular clergy favourable, but the regulars strongly opposed to a Government endowment; and he adds, the latter description of clergy were, in general, active fomenters of the rebellion. (I.S.P.O.)

was naturally not acceptable to such men as Clare, Foster, and Beresford; and Camden, while stating that 'the servants of the Crown' were wholly opposed to it, added, 'I am indeed convinced that the strong prejudices now entertained by the House of Commons against the Catholics, would prevent Government from carrying the measure were it thought expedient to introduce it. Indeed, there seems much reason to think the Catholics in general are not hostile to these commotions, and that even some of the most loyal of them wait with some hope that a revolution in Ireland will restore them to those possessions, and that consequence, they have lost.' The strength of the Orange Society, also, was much less than Portland had been told. There were perhaps 40,000 men enrolled in it, and Camden thought that much caution must be used in dealing with them, for it was very dangerous for a Government to employ one party in the kingdom to put down another. 'I think them likely to increase,' he wrote; 'and although it is possible they may be useful, if the disorders in this country should take a still more serious turn, at present any encouragement of them much increases the jealousy of the Catholics, and I should therefore think it unwise to give an open encouragement to this party, although it is certainly not expedient to suppress them.'[1]

I must now draw this long and melancholy chapter to a close. Like that which preceded it, it is a record of steadily growing disorganisation; of many distinct forms of anarchy and discontent, combined and directed by one seditious conspiracy. Much of the evil had long existed in Ireland, though it had for some generations been steadily diminishing. It was quickened into a new vitality by the French Revolution, and by the near prospect of invasion, but it also owed a great part

[1] Camden to Portland, March 29, 1798.

of its energy to enormous political faults, and to many acts of illegal and oppressive violence. We have now arrived at the brink of the catastrophe. A scene of blood was about to open, which not only left an indelible stain on the page of history, but also gave a fatal and enduring bias to the future of the nation.

CHAPTER X.

THE REBELLION.

THE United Irish Society had, as we have seen, passed through several distinct phases since its foundation at Belfast in October 1791. It was originally a perfectly legal society consisting of men who pledged themselves 'in the presence of God' to use all their influence to obtain 'an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament,' and, as a means to this end, to endeavour to secure the co-operation of Irishmen of all religious persuasions; and although some of its leaders undoubtedly aimed from the first at separation, the real objects of many, and the ostensible objects of all, were merely Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform. After the suppression of the society in 1794 it had been reconstructed on a new basis, and became distinctly treasonable. An oath was substituted for the original test, and it comprised an obligation to secrecy and fidelity. The mention of Parliament in the declaration of aims was suppressed; a very elaborate organisation was created consisting of a hierarchy of committees, each committee except the lowest being formed by election from the subordinate sections; and the whole was directed by a General Executive Directory of five members, elected by ballot from the Provincial Directories, and sitting in Dublin. In 1795 the society appears to have been almost confined to Ulster and to Dublin. In 1796 it spread more widely

through Leinster. In 1797 it extended over the greater part of that province, had become very powerful in Munster, and had gained some slight footing in Connaught. At the close of 1796 and in the beginning of 1797 a military organisation was grafted on it, and it became a main object to create, arm, and discipline regiments for a rebellion.

The organisation on paper appeared very perfect, but its real was very different from its apparent strength, and it was enormously weakened by want of subordination, earnestness, discipline, arms, and military skill. The executive and higher committees had not, in fact, the absolute power assigned to them in the constitution of the body, and it is probable that each committee acted with great independence. Of the multitude who had joined the society, only a few were genuine political fanatics. Many had taken the oath, coerced by the intimidation, or persuaded by the example of their neighbours; many others had done so through the belief that the United Irish body were likely to govern Ireland, through hopes that they would gain something in a confiscation of land, or through simple fear of the Orangemen, against whom the great rival organisation was supposed to be the chief protection. Such men were hardly likely to make serious sacrifices for political ends. But still the fact remains that the bulk of the peasantry in three provinces in Ireland, were in the beginning of 1798 enlisted in a conspiracy which was daily extending, and were looking forward to an immediate rebellion in conjunction with a French invasion. The manufacture, plunder, and concealment of arms, the constant attempts to seduce the soldiers and yeomen, the nightly drills, the great organised assemblies under the pretext of potato diggings, the frequent murder of magistrates, soldiers, and informers, abundantly showed the seriousness of the situation.

In February 1798—before the declaration of martial law, before the establishment of free quarters—the executive body computed that half a million of persons had been sworn into the society, and that more than 280,000 of them could be counted on to appear in the field. In a paper drawn up by Lord Edward Fitzgerald shortly before his arrest, it was calculated that the number of armed men enlisted was 279,896. Of these men, 110,990 were in Ulster, 100,634 in Munster, and 68,272 in Leinster. From Connaught no returns appear to have come in.[1]

A few words may be said about the members of the Supreme Executive. At the beginning of 1798 they appear to have been Thomas Addis Emmet, Arthur O'Connor, William James McNevin, Oliver Bond, and Richard McCormick. The last had been formerly Secretary of the Catholic Committee, and with McNevin he represented the Catholic element in the Directory. He was a warm friend of Tone, and he both knew and sanctioned Tone's first application for French assistance. He belonged, however, to the section of the Directory who were opposed to a rebellion before the arrival of the French, and he appears to have been much alarmed by the crimes and violence into which the movement had degenerated. In February 1798 he told Reynolds that he had ventured, at a provincial meeting in that month, to recommend less violent measures, and that he had been attacked in such a manner that he believed his life to be in danger, and had resolved to realise his property and escape from Ireland.[2] He fulfilled his intention, fled from Ireland in March, and did not return till long after the rebellion.[3] McNevin, as we have

[1] See Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 282–284, and also a paper in the Record Office, dated Feb. 26, 1798.

[2] *Life of Thomas Reynolds*, by his son, i. 197.

[3] Compare Tone's *Life*, i. 126, 127; Madden, iii. 48, 335.

seen, had gone on a mission to France, but he had returned in October 1797, and had reported to the Irish Directory that they might fully rely on French succour,[1] and, like McCormick, he desired that all rebellion should be prevented till that succour arrived. Oliver Bond was a rich woollen draper, the son of a Dissenting minister in Donegal. He had been imprisoned for his political conduct as early as 1793, and had borne a prominent part in the conspiracy from its commencement. He asserted on his examination by the Committee of the House of Lords, that though he had been elected to the Supreme Executive body, he had 'declined to act officially,' but he was in the closest confidence of the leaders of the movement, and he is said to have filled the important post of treasurer.[2]

Emmet and Arthur O'Connor were perhaps abler, they were certainly more conspicuous men than their colleagues, and the first is one of the few really interesting figures connected with the rebellion. He was a respectable lawyer, an excellent writer, a very honest and disinterested man, and he had certainly not embarked in treason either through motives of selfish ambition or through any mere love of adventure and excitement. He became a United Irishman in order to obtain a radical parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation; he found that these things were never likely to be attained except by force, and he at last succeeded in persuading himself that if Ireland were only detached from England she would soar to an unprecedented height of prosperity.[3] Nature had intended him much more for the life of a man of letters

[1] *Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords*, p. 12.

[2] This was stated both by McNally (Sept. 27, 1797) and by Turner.

[3] See the passage in his examination, McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 216, 217.

than for the scenes in which he was now engaged, and his type is one which is often found in the earlier stages of a rebellion, but is usually discarded, or eclipsed in blood, long before the struggle has run its course. His writings and his examination before the Privy Council are singularly interesting and instructive as showing the process by which a humane, honourable, and scrupulous man could become the supporter of a movement which was the parent of so many crimes. Grattan knew Emmet slightly and admitted his integrity, but he had a profound contempt for his political understanding. He described him, somewhat unceremoniously, as a quack in politics who despised experience, set up his own crude notions as settled rules, and looked upon elections and representation as if they were operations of nature rather than the work of art. Anyone, Grattan maintained, who could bring himself to believe that a country like Ireland, in which the people were so destitute that one-third of them were exempted from the payment of hearth money on account of their poverty, could be safely or tolerably governed with annual parliaments elected by universal suffrage, must be politically mad, and had forfeited all right to be considered in Irish politics. Emmet afterwards rose to considerable distinction in America and became Attorney-General of New York. Grattan—perhaps unjustly—thought his success much beyond his talents, and such as he would never have attained if he had remained at home.[1]

[1] See a curious conversation of Grattan in his *Life*, iv. 360, 361. Grattan acutely added: 'England should take care. She transports a great deal of hostile spirit to that quarter.' Judge Story, however—than whom there can be no higher authority—said that Emmet was 'by universal consent in the first rank of American advocates,' and he speaks with much respect both of his character and his talents. See his sketch of Emmet in Field's *Irish Confederates* (New York), pp. 335–338 (1851).

Arthur O'Connor was of a very different type. He was a man of wealth and high social position; a nephew of Lord Longueville; a member of a family remarkable for its violence, its eccentricities, and its domestic quarrels. He had some parliamentary standing, some shining talents, boundless courage and enterprise, and he risked and sacrificed for his opinions more than most of his colleagues. He was, however, rash, obstinate and arrogant, very incapable of waiving his personal pretensions for a public end, and very destitute of most of the higher qualities of a real leader of men. In one of his latest writings he mentions that early in life he had been deeply impressed by reading in Leland's 'History of Ireland' a description of the Irish policy advocated by some of the counsellors of Elizabeth. 'Should we exert ourselves,' they had said, 'in reducing this country to order and civility, it must acquire power, consequence, and riches. The inhabitants will be thus alienated from England; they will cast themselves into the arms of some foreign Power, or perhaps erect themselves into an independent and separate state. Let us rather connive at their disorder; for a weak and disordered people never can attempt to detach themselves from the Crown of England.'[1] This passage, O'Connor said, appeared to him to furnish the keynote explaining the English policy of his own day, and he declared that it was this conviction that chiefly shaped the political conduct of his life.[2] He lived to extreme old age; he became a general in the French service, and has left some writings which throw much curious light on his character and on his times. Like several of the early advocates of Catholic emancipation, he was utterly without sympathy for the Catholic creed.

[1] Leland, *History of Ireland*, ii. 291, 292.

[2] O'Connor's *Monopoly the Cause of all Evil*, iii. 541, 542.

Few men, indeed, can have had a greater contempt for priests and for what they teach, and in his last work he expressed his unmingled detestation of O'Connell, and of the movement which had placed the guidance of popular politics in Ireland under the direction of an ignorant and low-born priesthood. In spite of his admiration for the French Revolution, he was in his tastes and temper essentially aristocratic, though he believed that the Irish gentry by appealing to the Irish people could break the ascendency which English influence had hitherto exercised on the counsels of the nation, and put an end to the religious and class divisions by which that ascendency had been chiefly maintained.

Several other men were at this time active in guiding the conspiracy, most of them being in the Provincial Directory of Leinster. The most important was Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who was chiefly entrusted with the military organisation and who was intended to be commander-in-chief, though it is doubtful whether he was ever formally elected to the Supreme Executive. The co-operation of a member of the first family of the Protestant aristocracy was of no small advantage to the conspiracy in a country where the genuine popular feeling, amid all its aberrations, has always shown itself curiously aristocratic, and where the first instinct of the people when embarking in democratic and revolutionary movements has usually been to find some one of good family and position to place at their head. Lord Edward's very transparent character has been already described. No one could doubt his courage, his energy, his intense enthusiasm, or his perfect disinterestedness, and, as he had been a captain in the army and had seen active service, he had some military knowledge, but no competent judge appears to have discovered in him any real superiority of intellect.

The question of an immediate rising independently

of the French, had been much discussed in Ulster after the proclamation of General Lake in May 1797, and it was again agitated in the first weeks of 1798. Arthur O'Connor, as we have seen, had formerly maintained that a French landing ought to precede any rising in Ireland, but he now believed the organisation to have become sufficiently powerful for independent action, and in conjunction with Fitzgerald he strongly advocated it. The dispute ran very high, and it made O'Connor a bitter enemy of Emmet, whom he accused, very unjustly, of cowardice. The party of Emmet, however, which desired to postpone the explosion till the arrival of the French, again prevailed, but it prevailed only through the belief that a French invasion was imminent. Lewins and McNevin in 1797 had been instructed to ask only for 10,000 French troops, but for a very large quantity of arms.[1] It was calculated that such assistance would be amply sufficient to overthrow the English power in Ireland without bringing any danger of a French domination. Promises of support had more than once come from France, and although the battle of Camperdown had thrown a great damp on the hopes of the conspirators, they were revived by new assurances, and especially by a message which was received at the beginning of 1798 promising that French assistance would arrive in Ireland in April, or at the latest in the beginning of May.[2] The English Government on their side received secret intelligence in February and March of extensive preparations that were making at Dunkirk, Havre, Honfleur, and Calais.[3]

The invasion was eagerly looked forward to. A new military committee was appointed at Dublin in February for the express purpose of preparing a plan of

[1] McNevin, pp. 190, 195.

[2] See *Report of the Secret Committee*, Appendix, pp. cvii, cx, cxv, cxxi, cxxii.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 165–168.

co-operation with the French, and instructions were furnished to the adjutant-generals of the conspiracy to collect full information about the state of the United Irish regiments within their districts; about the roads, rivers, and bridges; the capacities of the towns and villages to receive troops, and the strength and movements of the enemy.[1] Arthur O'Connor determined to go to France to arrange a combined movement, but he was arrested at Margate on February 28, in company with a priest named O'Coigly or Quigley, an English agitator named Binns, and two other men who appear to have been his servants. McNally, in commenting upon this arrest, significantly observed that it would have very little effect upon the conspiracy, and that McCormick, McNevin, Drennan, and other leading Irishmen considered O'Connor so impetuous that they were not sorry to have him out of the way.[2]

It has often been asked why the Irish Government, with all the information at its disposal, and at a time when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, did not arrest the leading members of the conspiracy before it attained its height. In truth, however, the information they possessed was less full than has been supposed. Most of the schemes of the United Irishmen were communicated to them, and they had a general knowledge of the leading members of the conspiracy, but they appear to have known little about the Supreme Executive, and they were conscious that they could produce no evidence against the leaders which was the least likely to secure a conviction. From the June of 1797 they had received from an informer at Saintfield, in

[1] See *Report of the Secret Committee.*

[2] J. W., March 9, 1798. McNally had informed the Government as early as Jan. 11 that the invasion was to take place in April, that O'Connor had left Ireland, to the great satisfaction of his colleagues, and that his destination was France.

the county of Down, regular reports of county and provincial meetings of the United Irishmen in Ulster.[1] In the same month McNally had informed them that there was a secret directory of about six members at the head of the United Irishmen.[2] In September and October he told them that Bond was the treasurer of the conspiracy; that the chief management was now transferred from Belfast to Dublin and confined to a very few; that Keogh, McCormick, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Arthur O'Connor, Sweetman, Dixon, Chambers, Emmet, Bond, and Jackson were in the secret, but that he was convinced that even their part in the conspiracy was only a secondary one.[3] Some full and very valuable additional information was soon after sent by Turner from Hamburg.[4] But there was never any question of McNally appearing as a witness, and neither Turner nor the Saintfield informer would consent to do so.

From the beginning of 1798, however, it was the urgent desire of the Irish Government to arrest the conspirators. On January 8, Camden wrote acknowledging the information of Turner, and expressing his great regret that the author could not be induced to come forward as a witness, and that the other secret information which had been received from Lord Grenville's office could not be produced.[5] A month later he informed Portland that the confidential friends of the Government in Ireland, after deliberating on the information from Hamburg, had unanimously agreed that it was very advisable to arrest at once the leaders of the conspiracy, even though it was probable that no sufficient evidence could be produced to justify a trial.

[1] *Report of the Secret Committee*, Appendix No. xiv.
[2] J. W., June 21, 1797.
[3] Ibid. Sept. 27, Oct. 2, 1797.
[4] J. Richardson to the Marquis of Downshire, Nov. 19, 1797 (R.O.).
[5] Camden to Portland, Jan. 8, 1798.

Such an arrest, they contended, would dislocate the conspiracy, and if it produced an insurrection in some parts of the kingdom, 'this event might not be unpropitious, as it would be more in our power to crush it than if such event happened when the enemy were off the coast.' Portland, however, answered that this policy would be very rash and dangerous, and he positively forbade it.[1] Camden wrote that no reward ought to be withheld from Turner if he would come forward and give evidence, but it was answered that no earthly consideration would induce him to go to Ireland,[2] and he soon after, without informing the Government, returned to the Continent. But the Irish Government now felt so strongly the necessity of speedily breaking the organisation, that they even contemplated the extreme measure of proceeding against the conspirators by an Act of attainder.[3]

At last, however, they succeeded in obtaining the evidence they required. Their informant was a Catholic gentleman, named Thomas Reynolds. He was a young man of twenty-seven who had been a silk merchant, but had retired from business, and had purchased an estate

[1] See Camden to Portland, Feb. 8, 1798 (most secret), and the reply of Portland.

[2] Camden to Portland, March 1; Portland to Camden, March 7, 1798.

[3] Thus Cooke wrote to Lord Auckland on March 19: 'I fear we cannot convict *legally* our prisoners, though we have evidence upon evidence; but they *must* be punished, or the country is gone. Attainder if ever is justifiable.' Four days later Clare wrote to the same correspondent: 'Unless we can summon resolution to take a very decided step and to attaint the conspirators by Act of Parliament, I have no hope of bringing them to justice. It is not possible to prevail with men who give secret information to come forward in a court of justice; and if these villains escape with a temporary imprisonment only, there will be no possibility of living in Ireland.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 393, 394.) Camden had written to Portland on the 11th that the head committee must be arrested, even if it were found impossible to seize their papers.

in the county of Kildare. He was brother-in-law of Wolfe Tone, and a neighbour and distant connection of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. He had early taken a warm interest in the question of Catholic emancipation. He had been chosen as one of the representatives of Dublin in the Catholic Convention in 1792, but had retired from that body with Lord Fingall, and he had joined the United Irishmen in the beginning of 1797. According to his own account, he did so for the sole purpose of assisting the ostensible objects of the association, and was very reluctantly induced by his connection, Lord Edward, to accept a more prominent part. He was made colonel, treasurer of the province, and as such, member of the Executive of Leinster. He then heard that a rebellion was imminent, and it is stated that he learnt that the first step to be taken to insure success was to deprive the Executive Government, if necessary by assassination, of about eighty individuals, that the list was shown him, and that it comprised many of the first persons in Ireland, and among them some of his own relations.[1] Very reluctantly, and after great hesitation, he resolved to defeat the plan, and confided to an old loyalist friend that on the 12th of March the whole Provincial Directory of Leinster would meet at the house of Oliver Bond to prepare an insurrection. He added that he neither sought nor would accept honour or reward, but he made, according to his own account, four stipulations: he was himself never to be prosecuted as a United Irishman; he was not to be forced to prosecute any other person as a United Irishman; and the part

[1] This rests on the authority of Reynolds's son (*Life of Reynolds*, i. 187, 188), who states that the list was to have been produced at the trial of Cummins, from whom Reynolds received it, had not the confession of the United Irishmen induced the Government to desist from further prosecutions. It does not appear to have been ever stated by Reynolds in court.

he had taken in giving the information was to be concealed. As, however, he would probably, in spite of all precautions, be obliged to fly from Ireland in order to escape assassination, and as his property consisted chiefly of houses and lands, on which it was difficult to raise money in those distracted times, he demanded a sum of 500*l.* to enable him to quit the country.

Whether this was a true and complete account of his motives, it is impossible to say. Up to the date on which he gave evidence to the Government, Reynolds appears to have been looked upon by his party as a man whose character and position entitled him to such a measure of confidence and respect that they were most anxious to secure his services, and to place him in prominent and difficult positions. After he had given information they at once discovered that he was a monster in human form, a perfect prodigy of villainy. He had poisoned his mother. He had poisoned his mother-in-law. His whole life had been a tissue of the basest frauds. The information he gave the Government was due to the most sordid motives. The blow, however, which he had rendered possible was completely successful, and on March 12 fifteen of the leaders of the United Irishmen forming the Leinster Provincial Committee were arrested in the house of Bond and their papers seized. Emmet, Sweetman, Jackson, and McNevin, who were not included in the party at Bond's, were taken almost at the same time.

The conspiracy was thus suddenly, and at a most critical moment, at once deprived of its most important leaders; but though a warrant was out against Lord Edward Fitzgerald, he was still at large. There is little doubt that his escape was due to Reynolds, who might easily, if he had chosen, have placed him in the hands of the Government. On the 11th, the day before the arrests, he had an interview with Fitzgerald, and he

succeeded in so alarming him by accounts of information in the hands of the Government, as to induce him to abstain from the meeting at Bond's. On the 14th and 15th Reynolds had again secret interviews with Fitzgerald, and on the 16th with his wife, and he discussed with them the methods of concealment, and is stated even to have lent them the money they required for a hasty flight. His conduct at this time towards Fitzgerald shows real friendship, and of all the many slanders with which Reynolds was pursued none is more grotesquely false than that which described him as the betrayer of Lord Edward. Nor does he appear as yet to have had the smallest desire to bring his other colleagues to punishment, though he was anxious to defeat their designs and to extricate himself from the conspiracy. With the latter object he supported a proposal, which was made immediately after the arrest, for reforming the Provincial Directory, which would have excluded him from that body, and his only wish appears to have been to return to his country house, and, having prevented the effusion of torrents of blood, to take no further part in politics.

He soon found, however, that a neutral position was impossible. As he anticipated, he was suspected, and, as he anticipated also, the murderers were soon on his track. Three separate attempts seem to have been made to assassinate him, but they were baffled by his conspicuous courage and self-possession. On the other hand, the Government gave him no protection. His county was placed under martial law, he was himself a suspected man, and the officers in command knew nothing of the service he had secretly rendered. A large party of dragoons and militia under Captain Erskine were sent to live on free quarters at Kilkea Castle. Their proceedings there seem to be a fair sample of the military licence that was then prevailing.

The floors and wainscoting were torn up, the walls were pierced in many places in search for arms, the staircases and furniture were broken with wanton violence, and the whole interior of the castle was reduced to ruin. The loss was estimated by Reynolds at several thousands of pounds. His troubles were not yet over. A number of United Irishmen, probably hoping to ruin him and discredit his testimony, now informed against him, and he was arrested as a United Irishman and brought to Dublin for trial.

'A Mr. Reynolds,' wrote Camden to Portland, 'was the person who gave Government the information upon which the committee at Oliver Bond's was taken. This person was only guessed at, although a note found upon Bond had convinced many persons that he was the man. After that capture he went into the county of Kildare, and has scarcely given us any information since.' Camden doubted whether this was through fear of his old colleagues who suspected him, or through a desire to return to their party, but thought that, probably, he was waiting to see what course would be the most prudent. 'He has, however, been taken up,' continued the Lord Lieutenant, 'upon the most positive information against him, by those whom he commanded in a regiment which was formed.' When brought before the Council, he said that he was a protected person; they were obliged to concede this, and he then gave information on oath to the Government.[1]

[1] Camden to Portland, May 11, 1798. Ten days later Lord Clare wrote to Auckland: 'A man who had given us private information, on the express condition of never being desired to come forward publicly, was betrayed by some of his subalterns in the county of Kildare, and arrested in consequence by General Dundas, who commands in that district, without communication with Government, and sent up to Dublin in custody. In this dilemma the gentleman's scruples have vanished, and he will, I think, enable us to bring many of the leading traitors to justice,

The moment was very critical, and it was rendered still more so by the dangerous illness of Pelham, and especially by the dispute which had just broken out between Abercromby and the Irish Government. On March 30 the blow which was struck on the 12th was followed by the famous proclamation of martial law and free quarters, which was undoubtedly a proximate cause of the rebellion. Express orders were given to Abercromby to employ the military in the disturbed districts, and especially in Kildare, Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, the King's County, the Queen's County, and Kilkenny, without waiting for directions from the civil magistrates, for the purpose of crushing rebellion in every shape, and forcibly disarming the rebels. The officers were authorised to quarter troops wherever it might seem to them necessary, to press horses and carriages, to demand forage and provisions, to hold courts-martial for all offences, and to issue 'proclamations.' Special notices to the inhabitants of particular counties were now promulgated, summoning them to give up all arms and ammunition within ten days, and announcing that if there was reason to believe that this had not been fully done, the troops would be sent in large bodies to live at free quarters among them, and other very severe measures would be used to enforce obedience.[1]

This proclamation opened a scene of horrors hardly surpassed in the modern history of Europe. In order to form a just and sane judgment of it, we must bear clearly in mind the desperate condition of the country. There was no longer any serious hope of preventing a rebellion. There was abundant evidence that at this time tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of men were

and at their head Lord Edward Fitzgerald.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 421.)

[1] Plowden, ii. 676. Camden to Portland, March 30, 1798. *Report of the Secret Committee*, Appendix, pp. ccxcv, ccxcvi. *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 168, 169.

organised in a treasonable conspiracy, enrolled in regular regiments, with their officers, their arms, and their ammunition, and only waiting the arrival of the French fleet, which was expected in April, to burst into open rebellion. Papers were flying from cabin to cabin announcing that the deliverers would soon be on the sea; that the hour of struggle, of triumph, and of vengeance was at hand. All the best accounts that came to the Government represented rebellion as not only certain, but imminent. McNally repeatedly warned them that the only difference among the leaders was whether or not they should wait for the arrival of the French, and he wrote in the beginning of 1798 that it was the general opinion that in two months Ireland would be separated from England.[1] Another informant, two days before the arrest at Bond's house, warned them that Lord Edward Fitzgerald had resolved to propose an immediate rising, and that, if not intercepted, it would certainly take place within four weeks.[2] 'The North,' wrote a third and very important informer, 'is now, more than at any former period, held out as an example to the other provinces. To the perfect state of organisation there is their apparent tranquillity owing.' 'Military organisation has been adopted in the city, and some battalions are already formed, and officers appointed.' Twelve men 'of the first military talent and experience' were said to be engaged, and assurances of immediate aid had come from the French Directory.[3]

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[1] J. W., Jan. 3, 1798.

[2] Information endorsed 'C., March 10, 1798.' This was, I believe, Reynolds.

[3] Anonymous letter, dated Stephen's Green, April 22, and endorsed 'Mag.' This was from Magan. Another informer, who professed to be on intimate terms with the leaders of the conspiracy, and to have access to all their plans, resolutions, and correspondence, corroborates the statement in the text that the apparent tranquillity of the North was only due to the perfection of its organisation. 'It was in the North,' he continued, 'that the

Higgins, who, among his other occupations, seems to have done business as a land agent, mentions that he had been in the country endeavouring, without any success, to collect some rents. Several of the poorer kind of tenantry, he added, candidly declared that they never expected to see an agent among them again, for they had been promised that the lands were 'to be their own, and divided equally. It was by this kind of seduction that numberless of the ignorant and lower orders were drawn from their allegiance by better informed traitors.'[1] Magistrates reported that when they licensed public-houses they were told that this would be the last time they would be asked to do so, and tithe proctors that there was a general belief that tithes would never again be paid.[2]

The expectation of revolution was universal, but the rising was not to take place till the arrival of the French. There was now, therefore, a short respite—an ominous and imperfect calm, broken by constant accounts of the murder of magistrates and informers, of attacks upon sentries, of nightly raids for arms, of which that on the town of Cahir was the most conspicuous and the most audacious. Upon the use that was made of this short interval the result of the contest might depend.

No one who will honestly face this situation can doubt that it demanded extreme vigour—a vigour which would inevitably transcend the limits of ordinary law.

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spirit of rebellion took its birth. It is in the North it is fostered. It is there that it is brought to maturity. It is there, in fine, lie the hopes, the spring, the wealth, the force of the United Irishmen.' (Letter endorsed 'V. secret, March 27.') We have already seen that orders had been issued in France that Ulster was to remain quiet till the rebellion, but that disturbances might be made in other quarters in order to draw the troops from the quarter which was intended to be the chief scene of the struggle.

[1] F. H., May 15, 1798.

[2] Musgrave.

One of the ablest of the rebels afterwards acknowledged, that up to the proclamation of March 30 the process of arming the people for rebellion went smoothly on, and that it was this proclamation and the measures that followed, that alone arrested it.[1] On the other hand, no one who knew the state of Ireland could doubt that such measures, when adopted, must lead to horrible abuses. Ireland was now wholly unlike what it had been at the outbreak of the French Revolution. The crimes and panics of the last few years, the fierce passions that had been aroused, and the tension of long-continued danger and suspense, had filled it with savage and inveterate hatreds, broken down all discipline in the army, set class against class, and creed against creed. When a half-disciplined yeomanry and militia, demoralised by a long course of licence and irritated by many outrages, came to live at free quarters upon a hostile peasantry, who regarded them as Orangemen, and who were taught that every Orangeman had sworn to exterminate the Catholics, it was not difficult to anticipate the result.

The burnings of houses which had been well known in the North were now carried on upon a yet larger scale in Leinster, and the free quarters formed a new and terrible feature in the system of military coercion. There is reason to believe that this system was adopted contrary to the general wishes of the Irish gentry,[2] and one of the principal of those in the Queen's County wrote a letter to Cooke clearly pointing out its evils. 'I have my fears,' he wrote, 'this plan will not answer the end. It will unavoidably involve in punishment

[1] *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, i. 31.

[2] 'The gentlemen seem averse to assist the military in the manner in which Sir Ralph means to dispose of them, viz. by living at free quarters upon the disaffected inhabitants.' (Camden to Portland, April 23, 1798.)

the innocent with the guilty. The soldiers will find miserable means of living among those who are the robbers and defenders. Of course they will not, cannot be restrained from laying hold of the substance and property of farmers who are innocent and loyal. Indiscriminate punishment and much mischief must ensue. Surely, my dear Cooke, this is a more violent and coercive system than burning the houses of those who were known to be delinquents.' [1]

If Abercromby had continued in command, it is possible that the abuses resulting from this system might have been restrained, though they could not have been wholly prevented, but neither Lake nor the Irish Government appear to have made the smallest effort to check them. District after district was now proclaimed, and after the stated interval the soldiers descended like a flight of locusts upon them. They were quartered in the best of the houses of the suspected persons in proportion to the supposed means of the owners, and they lived as in an enemy's country. Many men were ruined by their exactions and their depredations. All the neighbouring houses were searched, and any house in which any weapon was found was immediately burnt. Many others were burnt because the owners, terror-stricken perhaps by the violence around them, had abandoned them, or because some of the innumerable seditious papers were found in them. One of the rebel leaders afterwards described how in one small corner of Wicklow in a single morning no less than fourteen houses were burnt by a single man.[2] Sometimes, after a period of coercion had failed to produce a surrender of arms, a proclamation was issued stating that the nightly patrols would for a time be withdrawn in order that the

[1] Charles Coote (Montrath) to Cooke, April 15, 1798.
[2] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 20.

people might be able without fear to collect the arms and to bring them to an appointed place, and that if this was not done before a given date the whole district would be burnt. Great piles of arms came in this way into the possession of the Government, though the people sometimes showed their feelings by breaking them to pieces before they deposited them in the place that was assigned.[1]

This method of disarming appears to have been adopted in all the towns of the county of Kildare, and a few particular instances which are preserved will enable the reader to understand the manner in which it was worked. Thus the inhabitants of the town of Kildare had refused to give up the arms which the commanding officer was convinced they possessed, and they alleged that there were none in the town. General Walford at once called the inhabitants together, and announced to them on his honour that if they did not bring in their arms in twenty-four hours he would burn every house in the town, and he at the same time assured them that if they complied with his order they should have complete protection, and that not a single soldier would appear out of his barracks on that evening in order that the people should have the opportunity of collecting and depositing their arms without fear. The measure proved successful, and great quantities of arms were brought in.[2] From Athy in the same county Colonel Campbell wrote: 'In consequence of burning a few houses in this town and the neighbourhood, together with a little military discipline, we have got a number of pikes.'[3] In other cases the resistance was more obstinate. 'This last week,' wrote Lady Louisa Conolly to Mr. Ogilvie on May 21, 'was a most painful one to

[1] *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 225, 226.
[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, May 25, 1798.
[3] Col. Campbell, May 14 (I.S.P.O.)

us. Maynooth, Kilcock, Leixlip, and Celbridge have had part of a Scotch regiment quartered at each place, living upon free quarters and every day threatening to burn the towns. I have spent days in entreaties and threats to give up the horrid pikes. Some houses burnt at Kilcock yesterday produced the effect. Maynooth held out yesterday, though some houses were burnt and some people punished. This morning the people of Leixlip are bringing in their arms. Celbridge as yet holds out, though five houses are now burning. Whether obstinacy or that they have them not I cannot say; . . . we have fortunately two most humane officers, that do not do more than is absolutely necessary from their orders.' 'I expect,' wrote Colonel Napier on the same day, 'on my return to find Celbridge and Maynooth in ashes, as that was the "order of the day."'[1]

Horrible abuses and horrible sufferings inevitably accompanied these things. Many who resisted, and not a few it is said who did not resist, were shot dead on their thresholds, while countless families were deprived of all they possessed and were driven homeless into the world. Farm horses were seized and carried away. Stores of provisions were broken into and shamefully wasted or destroyed, and acts of simple robbery and purely wanton violence were of daily occurrence.

Torture was at the same time systematically employed to discover arms. Great multitudes were flogged till they almost fainted; picketed and half strangled to extort confessions. Blacksmiths were the special objects of suspicion and vengeance, and many of them were scourged almost to death in the streets of the villages in order to compel them to state what pikes

[1] Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 100, 103.

they had made, and to reveal the persons to whom they had consigned them.[1]

It had been the habit of the republican party in Ireland, as in France, to cut short their hair as a distinctive sign, and the 'croppies,' as they were termed, were an obvious mark for military violence. The torture of these men soon became a popular amusement among the soldiers. Some soldiers of the North Cork Militia are said to have invented the pitched cap of linen or thick brown paper, which was fastened with burning pitch to the victim's head and could not be torn off without tearing out the hair or lacerating the skin. One soldier obtained a special reputation by varying the torture. He was accustomed to cut the hair of the victims still shorter, to rub into it moistened gunpowder and then to set it on fire. Sometimes also an ear or a portion of an ear was cut off.

All this went on in the proclaimed districts without interference and without restraint. In the great majority of cases no doubt the sufferers were justly suspected of being enrolled in a treasonable conspiracy and of possessing concealed arms. But it was constantly asserted, and it is in the highest degree probable, that in the complete military licence that prevailed, many of the victims were perfectly innocent. Men were acting under the blinding influence of panic and widespread suspicions, and often under influences that were still more pernicious. In a country where every informer was at once marked out for assassination, secret information naturally and necessarily played a great part, and it gave terrible opportunities for the gratification of private cupidities and private malice. Every Irish country district is sure to be full of quarrels

[1] See the graphic description in the *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 226, 227; Hay's *Hist. of the Rebellion in Wexford*, p. 64.

about leases and boundaries and trespasses, quarrels between landlords and tenants, between competing tenants, between debtors and creditors, between farmers and labourers. The burning of houses and the flogging of individuals were very often not the result of any judicial or quasi-judicial investigation, or even of the decision of an experienced and superior officer. Young subalterns, sergeants of militia, common soldiers ordered and perpetrated these things, and it is but too probable that they often acted on the whispered suggestion of a private enemy.[1] If some men cut their hair short to attest their republican sentiments, others did so for simple convenience, while the hair of others was cut short by the United Irishmen for the express purpose of exposing them to the vengeance of the soldiers.[2] Quakers, who had scruples about applying for military protection, often fell under suspicion, though they were among the most orderly and peaceful inhabitants of the country.[3]

Outrages on women were very common. Peasant girls had often thrown themselves enthusiastically into the United Irish movement, and attested their sentiments by their green ribbons, while many others who knew or cared nothing about politics wore something green in their dress. Every person who did so was tolerably sure to be exposed to insults which planted far and wide, among a peasantry peculiarly susceptible on such matters, the seeds of deadly, enduring hatred.[4]

[1] See e.g. Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 32.

[2] See Gordon's *Rebellion*, pp. 57–59. Gordon notices that after the rebellion, short hair became the fashion among men of all opinions.

[3] *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 225.

[4] An old magistrate near Bray, in the county of Wicklow, wrote in April to the Government remonstrating against a project of sending troops to Newtown Mount Kennedy. 'We have never had here,' he said, 'the smallest appearance of disturbance, nor are we likely to have the least. . . . I deprecate dragooning such people. It is a bad

Other outrages were unconnected with any real or pretended political cause, and were such as inevitably occur when an undisciplined soldiery are quartered among a hostile population. Dr. Dickson, the Protestant Bishop of Down, told Lord Holland how 'he had seen families returning peaceably from mass assailed without provocation by drunken troops and yeomanry, and the wives and daughters exposed to every species of indignity, brutality, and outrage, from which neither his remonstrances nor those of other Protestant gentlemen could rescue them.'[1]

In general the military proclamations were exclusively directed to the objects of disarming the people and paralysing rebellion, but there were instances in which these lines were shamefully exceeded. The following extraordinary order was issued at Cork on May 7: 'Whereas it has been reported to General Sir James Stuart that in some parts of the county where it has been necessary to place troops at free quarters for the restoration of tranquillity, general subscriptions have been entered into by the inhabitants to purchase provisions for the troops, by which means the end proposed of making the burden fall as much as possible on the guilty is defeated by making it fall in a light proportion on the whole, and thereby easing and protecting the guilty; it has been thought proper to direct that whenever the practice has been adopted or shall be attempted, the general officers commanding divisions

system except in open rebellion. Those already enemies to Government it exasperates. Of those who are wavering and timid it makes decided enemies, and it tends to disaffect the loyal. Where is the man whose blood will not boil with revenge who sees the petticoat of his wife or sister cut off her back by the sabre of the dragoon merely for the crime of being green, a colour certainly with them innocent of disaffection?' (Mr. Edwards, Old Court.) Compare Gordon's *Rebellion*, p. 59.

[1] *History of the Whig Party*, i. 114.

in the southern district shall immediately double, triple, and quadruple the number of soldiers so stationed, and shall send out foraging parties to provide provisions for the troops in the quantities mentioned in the former notice bearing date April 27, and that they shall move them from station to station through the district or barony until all arms are surrendered and tranquillity is perfectly restored, and until it is reported to the general officers by the gentlemen holding landed property and those who are employed in collecting the public revenue and tithes, that all rents, taxes, and tithes, are completely paid up.'[1]

There was, of course, considerable difference among the soldiers. A Quaker lady, who lived at Ballitore in the county of Carlow, and who has left the truest picture of the state of that part of Ireland during the rebellion, notices the excellent conduct of the King's County Militia, who were quartered upon that district, and how, when they were removed, the villagers escorted them on their way with tears and lamentations; and she contrasts their conduct with that of the Tyrone Militia, who succeeded them, and who lived in free quarters, wearing ostentatiously orange ribbons among the Catholic peasantry, and plundering alike the loyal and the disloyal.[2] The North Cork Militia, the Welsh Regiment of Ancient Britons, and two Hessian regiments, which were sent over just before the rebellion, appear to have been those which left the most bitter recollections in Ireland.

Particular instances of atrocious suffering were often related. More than one victim died under the lash, and the terror it produced was to many even worse than the punishment. Gordon mentions a case which

[1] Dunfermline's *Life of Abercromby*, pp. 122, 123.

[2] *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 223, 224.

came under his own notice, of a labouring man who dropped dead through simple fear.[1] Another case is related of a man in Dublin, who, maddened by the pain of the pitched cap, sprang into the Liffey and ended at once his sufferings and his life. In a third case, which occurred at Drogheda, a man who had undergone 500 lashes in order to compel him to reveal some concealed arms, fearing that his fortitude would be overcome, pretended that arms were concealed in a particular garden, and availed himself of a few moments of freedom which he thus obtained, to cut his throat.[2] Flogging to extort confessions appears to have been nowhere more extensively or more successfully practised than in Dublin itself, under the very eyes of the Government, and under the direction of men who were closely connected with it. A plot to seize Dublin did unquestionably exist; great stores of pikes had been accumulated, and a great number of them were discovered through the floggings. The riding school of Beresford was well known as the chief scene of the torture. In the country, it is said, whole villages were deserted, and the inhabitants slept in the ditches and in the fields through fear of outrages from the yeomen.

Some names were especially conspicuous for the hatred they attracted. There was Gowan, who had performed good service in hunting down robbers among the Wicklow mountains, but who now became famous for the multitude of houses he burnt, and who was said,

[1] Gordon's *Hist. of the Rebellion*, pp. 88, 89.

[2] Teeling's *Narrative*, pp. 133, 134. Madden has collected much evidence about the practice of torture, i. 292–333. In a letter to Lord Castlereagh, General Dunne stated that he had ascertained that a man had been whipped to death by a magistrate in the King's County, and by another man who acted under his orders. (B.-Gen. Dunne (Tullamore) to Lord Castlereagh, Aug. 2, 1798, I.S.P.O.)

though very probably untruly, to have on one occasion stirred his punch with the severed finger of a rebel. There was Hepenstal, known as 'the walking gallows,'[1] a soldier in the Wicklow Militia, gigantic in size and herculean in strength, who was accustomed to extort confessions by tying a rope round his prisoner's neck, flinging him over his shoulder, and holding him thus suspended above the ground till the half-strangled victim disclosed his arms. The figure, however, which stands out in the clearest relief is that of Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald, the High Sheriff of Tipperary. His proceedings in that county became the subject of a judicial trial, and of elaborate debates in the House of Commons, and are therefore known to us with some certainty, and with their chief circumstances of aggravation and palliation. A short study of his history and character is very instructive, as revealing a type which the stormy conditions of Irish life naturally produced, and which, if Ireland were ever separated from English influence and criticism, might once more become common.

It was a character by no means destitute of estimable and even noble qualities. His energy, courage, and knowledge of the country were fully admitted by those who most severely censured him, and after the rebellion was over he received a warm and unanimous vote of thanks from the Grand Jury of the county. In the beginning of the year, when rebellion was known to be smouldering there, and when French invasion was constantly expected, the principal gentlemen of his county came to him, as the man most likely to grapple success-

[1] See Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 308, 309. He is said also to have shot some United Irishmen in a manner hardly distinguishable from naked murder. The epitaph written for him is well known:

Here lie the bones of Hepenstal,
Judge, jury, gallows, rope and all.

fully with the conspiracy, and implored him to accept the dangerous position of High Sheriff. He consented to do so, and it was emphatically stated in Parliament that if Tipperary escaped the horrors of rebellion which desolated Wicklow, Wexford, Carlow, Kildare, and Meath, this exception was mainly due to the vigilance and to the severities of its High Sheriff.[1] A curious letter from a prominent Tipperary gentleman describes Fitzgerald's dealing with a number of disaffected men. 'The High Sheriff made a speech of three hours, partly in Irish, explaining what the French would do, and said he would give them a free pardon if they delivered their arms, pikes, &c., which I think we had got nearly in before, but I told him there were some people in the parish who perhaps were not entitled to pardon. He asked me their names and called them forward. Then he asked me their crimes. I told him for being up (*sic*). He asked them if they confessed; they said "Yes," but had not received their commissions. . . . He shook hands with them, gave them a lecture, made them all kneel down and pray for the King, and forgave all past offences.' He was now going to raise a corps of 100 men, 'every one of whom are to be United Irishmen. He has engaged some desperate scoundrels in this neighbourhood; he expects when he has them together that he will be able to act upon them as Sir John Fielding did on the Bow Street officers—set a rogue to catch a rogue.' He issued a printed notice ordering all who had left their homes to return at once to defend them, and to provide quarters for his Majesty's troops, at the same time eulogising in very high-flown terms the conduct of a certain Mrs. Bunbury, who with the assistance of two men-servants had successfully defended her house against a marauding party. He

[1] See Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 765, 766, 768, 787.

trusted that 'such heroic conduct of a lady of such high distinction, eminent for beauty and elegance of manners, will raise the crimson blush of shame on the pallid cheeks of those puny heroes who so disgracefully and cowardly surrendered large quantities of well-loaded arms to the rebels.'[1]

Those who are well acquainted with Irish life and character will, I think, recognise in these extracts a not unfamiliar type, and under the auspices of Fitzgerald the disarming of Tipperary was carried out with tremendous, unscrupulous but successful energy. At the head of forty men he attacked a large body of armed rebels, and carried no less than thirty-seven carts full of captured arms into Cashel. An Irish magistrate has usually good reason, from secret information or common report, to suspect men against whom no legal evidence can be obtained, of being centres of crime and disaffection in their neighbourhoods. All such men were now seized and mercilessly flogged, till through pain or terror some kind of confession was obtained. The men who in broad daylight had attacked and plundered Cahir had hitherto defied detection, but now at last information was obtained from a man whose courage failed when he had been tied to the stake for flogging. At Nenagh several men were flogged, and great quantities of concealed arms were in consequence discovered. At Carrick-on-Suir the flogging of a single man produced such terror, that not only he but thirty-six others acknowledged themselves to be United Irishmen. 'There was scarcely a man,' it was said in Parliament, 'on whom corporal punishment had been inflicted to extort confession, who did not acknowledge guilt and discover widely extended accompliceship in treason. Immense quantities of arms of every kind were dis-

[1] Sir J. Carden to Lord Rossmore (Templemore), May 5, 1798.

covered, and in consequence cartloads were brought daily into Clonmel from all quarters of the county, and thus by the timely interposition of this spirited magistrate were the lives and properties of the gentlemen and loyal inhabitants preserved on the very brink of destruction.' Fitzgerald himself, when his case came into the law court, defended himself in a vehement speech, declaring that 'while sheriff he felt himself authorised to take every mode of obtaining confessions, and that in order to discover the truth, if every other mode failed, he had a right to cut off their heads.'[1]

A very respectable man named Wright, a teacher of French in the town of Clonmel, fell under his suspicion. He happened to be connected with some of the principal families of the neighbourhood, and his case therefore received an amount of attention which would not have been given to a poor and unprotected peasant. It appears that one of the suspected persons, under the torture of flogging, stated that Wright held the important position of secretary to the United Irishmen in the county, and it is possible, though by no means certain, that some secret information had been given against him. Fitzgerald formed a strong, though apparently a perfectly erroneous, opinion that this man was the head and centre of United Irishmen in Tipperary, and the repository of all their secrets. The rebellion was at this time raging furiously in Wicklow and Wexford, and the fate of Ireland and the lives of multitudes of loyal men seemed trembling in the balance.

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[1] Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 762–764, 768. The reporter says the gravity of the court was a little discomposed by this method of obtaining confessions. Beresford, in one of his letters to Auckland, says: 'So far as I can see, no man has withstood the fear of any corporal punishment, and certain I am, that without much outrage hundreds would peach.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 412.)

'The peasantry of Tipperary,' said the Attorney-General, 'were to a man organised, armed, and ready to take the field at a moment's warning. A body of 8,000 rebels were ready to attack the town of Clonmel.'[1]

It was under these circumstances of terror and danger that the following horrible scene was enacted, which was disclosed in a trial before Lord Yelverton and Judge Chamberlain, and afterwards related to the House of Commons by the son of the former judge, who had been one of the counsel of Wright. Having heard that charges had been brought against him, Wright went of his own accord to the house of Fitzgerald, for the purpose of surrendering himself and challenging investigation. Fitzgerald at once drew his sword, ordered him to his knees, and without any kind of trial, of his own authority condemned him to be first flogged and then shot. Next day Wright was dragged to a ladder in one of the streets to undergo his sentence. He knelt down to pray, with his hat before his face. Fitzgerald snatched his hat from him, trampled it on the ground, struck the prisoner on the forehead with his sword, kicked him, and dragged him by the hair. Wright was then stripped naked, tied to the ladder, and fifty lashes were administered. An officer who was in the town came up and asked Fitzgerald the reason of the punishment. Fitzgerald handed him a French note which had been found on the prisoner, and said that although he did not himself understand the language, he believed the major would find in it 'what would justify him in flogging the scoundrel to death.' The officer read it, and found it to be a perfectly insignificant note postponing an appointment. He explained this to Fitzgerald, but the Sheriff notwithstanding ordered the flogging to proceed. Wright

[1] Howell, p. 785.

remained silent. One hundred more lashes were administered with frightful severity, leaving the wretched man a mass of bleeding wounds, and it is even alleged that the High Sheriff asked the commanding officer of the troops who were quartered in Clonmel to send a file of soldiers to shoot the prisoner. If the request was made, it was probably for the purpose of exciting terror, for there appears to have been no attempt to carry out the sentence. Wright was flung into prison, where he remained for six or seven days without any medical assistance, in a cell with no other furniture than a straw pallet without covering.[1]

An indemnity Act, as I have said, had passed, indemnifying loyalists for illegal acts committed in order to suppress the rebellion; but in spite of it, Wright carried his case in March 1799 into the law courts, contending that the indemnity only applied to cases in which the magistrates had acted on clear, or at least serious, evidence of treason, had taken all possible means of ascertaining the guilt of the persons they punished, and had exercised their power with common humanity. This view of the law was fully supported by the two judges. They declared that the indemnity was never intended to protect a wanton and inhuman exercise of power, even for the purpose of putting down rebellion, that there must have been a grave and serious examination of the accused person, and that the magistrate was only entitled to plead the indemnity Act when he was able to produce information on oath of the grounds on which he acted. Strong evidence was given of the loyalty of Wright, and no evidence of the smallest value was given to impugn it. The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff with 500*l.* damages, and the judges fully concurred in the verdict, expressed their

[1] Compare the two accounts in Howell, xxvii. 761, 769–771.

belief in the perfect innocence of Wright, and added that if much larger damages had been given they would not have been excessive.

The Government brought the case before Parliament, asking for a secret committee, before which Fitzgerald might lay the grounds of his conduct, and for a special Act of indemnity. The debate was very animated and instructive. It was not contended by the ministers that Wright was a guilty man, though the language both of the Attorney-General and of some of the supporters of the Government implied that there were reasons for believing it. On the other hand, Colonel Bagwell, who was one of the principal gentlemen near Clonmel, declared in the most emphatic terms, and from full knowledge, that Wright was one of the most respectable and upright men in the town, and that not a shadow of just suspicion attached to him, and he asserted that there had not been more than a single case in which an inhabitant of Clonmel was proved to be a United Irishman, although a number of the inhabitants of that town had been punished as such by the High Sheriff. Both he and Mr. Hutchinson, the brother of Lord Donoughmore, speaking with an intimate knowledge of the country, declared that although Fitzgerald had undoubtedly shown great zeal and performed great services, they believed that many of those whom he had tortured were perfectly innocent, and that his 'zeal had in a great many instances carried him much too far, and excited a great deal of reprobation from many gentlemen in the country.' In the town of Clogheen, Hutchinson said, a respectable innkeeper had been brought out of his house by Fitzgerald, tied to a ladder, and whipped. When he had received some lashes, Fitzgerald asked him, 'Who swore you?' The man answered that he never was sworn. After a few more stripes, the same

question was repeated and the same answer given. The scourging was again begun and the High Sheriff then said, 'If you do not confess who swore you I'll cut you to death.' The man, unable to bear the torture any longer, did name a person who he said had sworn him. He was at once cut down, when he said to Lord Cahir, 'That was a lie, my lord. The man never swore me; but he said he would cut me to death if I did not accuse somebody, and to save my life I told the lie.'

What confidence, it was asked, could be placed in confessions obtained by such means? And what could be more hideously repugnant both to the letter and the spirit and the practice of English law than this systematic employment of torture as the means of extorting confessions? No serious objection was raised to the general Act of indemnity which had been passed. It was an extreme measure required by an extreme necessity, but if it was not to be made the instrument of intolerable tyranny it must be scrupulously limited, and its application carefully watched. Nothing could be more clear, nothing could be more equitable, than the principles laid down by the judges, but Parliament was now asked to pass a measure which would have the effect of sweeping away every safeguard. It was asked by an *ex post facto* law made in favour of an individual who had notoriously exceeded all bounds of humanity and moderation, to reverse a decision of a law court, arrived at after a patient trial, by a most respectable jury, and with the full approbation of two eminent judges. It was asked to shut out from all hope of redress and compensation not only Wright, but the many other innocent men who had been tortured on the vaguest and most unfounded suspicion, and unjustly branded as traitors. It was even asked to deepen the stigma upon their characters by a parliamentary proceeding based upon evidence which was not to be disclosed. 'Was Mr.

Fitzgerald,' it was asked, 'to be permitted to give secret evidence before a secret committee, and say what he pleased against the characters of those persons, in his own justification, without giving them any opportunity of refuting his assertions?' 'Was Parliament to interfere between the justice of the country and the innocent persons injured, by setting aside the verdict of a most respectable jury, which had done more than anything else to quiet the country?' 'Was it to shut the door of justice against the people, and thus to tell them that they must expect no share of protection from the laws, and must therefore look to some other means of vindication?' Was it to give a distinct legislative sanction, said one member who was at this time wavering on the question of the Union,[1] to the most reckless and most wanton application of torture? If it did, 'he declared to God, whatever might be the sentiments of his constituents, he should for himself think the sooner that Parliament was extinguished the better!'

Fitzgerald, however, had powerful defenders, and his case was urged with eloquence and skill. It was the case, it was said, of a man who at the earnest entreaty of the gentry of his county had accepted a post of great difficulty and danger, who had done so with no object except the public good, and who by his energy and courage had undoubtedly saved the lives of thousands and preserved a great county from carnage and ruin. It was said that the method of extorting confessions by torture had never been practised in England. Had there ever been in England, had there been in any other country in modern times, a situation even distantly resembling that of Ireland? Could anyone who knew what was happening in Wexford and Wicklow, and how far the conspiracy had extended in Tipperary,

[1] Browne, member for Dublin University.

doubt that this county was in imminent, daily, almost hourly, danger of becoming from end to end a scene of massacre and desolation? It was by the floggings to extort confessions and discover arms that the conspiracy was broken and the danger averted, and every other means had signally failed. It would no doubt have been much more regular if the suspected persons had been brought before juries, but if such a course had been taken, many of those who now denounced the conduct of Fitzgerald would probably have been long since hanged from the lamp-posts or pierced by the rebel pikes. It is true that no evidence had been adduced at the trial to show the guilt of Wright. But the reason of this was very manifest. Fitzgerald was bound by an oath of secrecy not to reveal the information which had been given to him. If he had disclosed the names of his informers in order to vindicate himself in a court of justice, he would have betrayed his duty and broken his oath, and handed over those who had trusted to him to almost certain death. Everyone who knew the country knew that 'if the names of any of these men were to be disclosed, he would not live twenty-four hours.' At the very last assizes, a witness who was going to Clonmel to substantiate at a trial the evidence he had given before the magistrate, was murdered near the gate of the town. A secret committee of the House of Commons was the only tribunal before which such information could be disclosed, with safety to the lives of the informants. Those who dilated upon the excessive violence of Fitzgerald said little about his conspicuous merits and the strong claim he had established on the country, and they made no adequate allowance for the extreme dangers of the moment. At a time when a great and horrible rebellion was raging in the adjoining counties, when Tipperary was known to be fully armed and organised, when outrages were of

hourly occurrence, and when there was good reason to believe that within a few days the whole county would be in a blaze, was it surprising or unpardonable that a loyal man, on whom the chief responsibility of preserving the peace devolved, should have somewhat lost the coolness of his judgment, and have sometimes acted with undue violence and precipitation? Conduct in such moments must not be judged by the ordinary rules which are applicable to quiet times. Parliament had passed an Act of amnesty casting a veil of pardon over the crimes that had been committed by the rebels. Ought it not to cover with an equally effective indemnity the excesses that might have been committed by loyal men, for the purpose of suppressing and preventing those crimes? It was well known that it was now the policy of the disloyal party to bring a multitude of vexatious actions against men who had taken an active part in suppressing the rebellion, and as it was impossible that the secret information on which they acted should be disclosed, it would often be impossible to defend them. It was the plain duty of Parliament to stop this. 'In considering the case of Mr. Fitzgerald, the House should act from motives of general policy, and not suppose it was meant to bias their judgment by individual consideration for the petitioner. . . . It was the duty of Parliament to protect loyal men for acts done merely with a view to suppress rebellion, and not leave them open to endless persecutions and suits at law.'

The question was argued at great length, and on both sides with conspicuous ability. It was at last settled by a new and fuller indemnity Act, which was so drawn as to make such prosecutions as that of Fitzgerald almost impossible. It provided that in all cases in which sheriffs or other officers or persons were brought to trial for acts done in suppressing the rebellion, a verdict for the plaintiff should be null and void unless

the jury distinctly found that the act had been done maliciously and not with an intent of suppressing rebellion, preserving public peace, or promoting the safety of the State; and that even where the juries did find that the act was 'malicious,' the judge or judges who tried the case should have the power of setting such verdicts aside.[1]

In relating this discussion I have departed from the strict chronological order of my subject, but I have done so because these debates throw a clear stream of authentic light upon the methods of repression which were at this time employed, the motives that inspired them, the arguments by which they were defended. What Fitzgerald did in Tipperary is probably not very unlike what was done in Wexford, Wicklow, and Kildare on the eve of the rebellion. In reading such narratives we seem transported from the close of the eighteenth century to distant and darker ages, in which the first conditions of civilised society had not yet been attained, and to which its maxims and reasonings are inapplicable. Clare and the party that followed him always justified this violence. By the burning of houses and the transportation of great numbers of untried men they had succeeded, they said, in disarming Ulster, the province where disaffection was most dangerous. By the unsparing use of the lash, Fitzgerald had broken the conspiracy in the great county of Tipperary. By very similar means Dublin had been disarmed, and the scheme for seizing it, paralysed. These methods did not, it is true, prevent an outbreak in Wexford and some adjoining counties, but they at least succeeded in forcing it into a premature explosion before the requisite organisation and concert had been completed, and before the French had appeared upon the scene.

[1] 39 Geo. III. c. 50.

The language of the report of the secret committee, in which the Government stated their own case, does not make sufficient allowance for the extent to which the rebellion was a mere unorganised rising of men who were driven to desperation by intolerable military tyranny, but it at least shows very explicitly the Government policy. Up to the middle of March, the writer says, there was no serious intention of hazarding a rebellion without foreign assistance. It was the policy of the leaders to risk nothing as long as their party was gaining strength, to extend their organisation, add to their stock of arms, and wait for events. 'It appears from a variety of evidence laid before your committee, that the rebellion would not have broken out so soon as it did, had it not been for the well-timed measures adopted by Government subsequent to the proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant and Council bearing date March 30. . . . From the vigorous and summary expedients resorted to by Government, and the consequent exertions of the military, the leaders found themselves reduced to the alternative of immediate insurrection, or of being deprived of the means on which they relied for effecting their purpose, and to this cause is exclusively to be attributed that premature and desperate effort, the rashness of which has so evidently facilitated its suppression.'[1]

It was a desperate policy, and it had desperate results. If regarded purely as a military measure, it was certainly successful, but it must be added that it was largely responsible for the ferocity with which the rebellion was waged, and that it contributed enor-

[1] *Report of the Secret Committee*, pp. 20, 26. So, too, in the examination of McNevin, Castlereagh said, 'You acknowledge the union [of United Irishmen] would have become stronger but for the means taken to make it explode.' (McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 203.)

mously to the most permanent and deadly evils of Irish life. The hatred and distrust of law and government, the inveterate proneness to seek redress by secret combination and by barbarous crimes, the savage animosities of class and creed and party, that make Irish government so difficult, were not created, but they were all immensely strengthened, by the events which I am relating. It must be added, too, that if martial law forced the rebellion into a premature explosion, and thus made it comparatively easy to deal with it, it also undoubtedly turned into desperate rebels multitudes who, if they had been left unmolested, would have been, if not loyal subjects, at least either neutral spectators or lukewarm and half-hearted rebels. When Emmet was asked what caused the late insurrection, he answered, 'The free quarters, the house burnings, the tortures, and the military executions in the counties of Kildare, Carlow, and Wicklow.' The answer was not a candid one, for long before these things had begun a great part of Ireland had been organised for rebellion, and was only waiting for the appearance of the French. The true causes, as we have seen, were partly political, and for these the Government was very largely responsible. The rebellion, however, among the ignorant Catholic peasantry was not mainly political. They had been in the first place allured into the conspiracy by promises of the abolition of tithes, the reduction or abolition of rents, and the redress of all real or imaginary grievances. They had then been persuaded by the United Irishmen that the Orangemen, with the connivance of the Government, intended to massacre them, and that they could only find safety in the protection of a great armed Catholic organisation. Once that organisation was planted among them, it spread rapidly by example, intimidation, or persuasion. The worst and most dangerous men came inevitably to the front. Many

crimes were committed. There was no regular and well-disciplined force like the modern constabulary sufficiently powerful to maintain the peace. Martial law was declared, and the tortures, the house burnings, and other manifold abuses that followed it soon completed the work, and drove the people in large districts to desperation and madness.

One of the most energetic of the leaders in Wicklow has left an account of his own experiences which is well worthy of attention. 'Self-preservation,' he says, 'was the motive which drove me into rebellion. . . . As to effecting a change of Government, it gave me little trouble or thought. Reform was much more necessary among the people of all ranks than the Government, which was good enough for me. If the laws were fairly and honestly administered, the people would have little reason to complain. It was private wrongs and individual oppression, quite unconnected with the Government, which gave the bloody and inveterate character to the rebellion in the county of Wicklow. The ambition of a few interested individuals to be at the head of affairs first lighted up the flame everywhere. . . . The poor people engaged in the Irish rebellion of 1798 had very little idea of political government. Their minds were more occupied with their own sufferings or enjoyments; and many, I might say most, were compelled to join in the rebellion on pain of death.'[1]

The capture at Bond's house on March 12 of the principal leaders of the organisation, and the general disarming under martial law which speedily followed, had given an almost fatal blow to the conspiracy; but efforts, which for a short time seem to have escaped the knowledge of the Government, were made to reconstruct it under a new Directory, in which the most prominent

[1] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 17, 18.

members were two brothers of the name of Sheares. They were lawyers, sons of a very estimable and generous Cork banker, who had sat for many years in the House of Commons, and they had ever since 1793 borne an active, though not a very considerable, part in the conspiracy. Henry Sheares, the elder, was a weak, vain, amiable, insignificant man, utterly unsuited for the position he assumed, and chiefly governed by the stronger will of his brother. Of John Sheares I have already spoken.[1] He impressed most of those with whom he came in contact as a man of ability and great energy, a genuine and dangerous fanatic of the type which rose to the ascendant in France during the Reign of Terror. Fitzgerald also, the destined commander, was still at large.

A few anxious and eventful weeks passed before the storm burst. Cooke, writing a week after the arrest at Bond's, expressed his opinion that the North was seriously better, and that the organisation in Dublin had been broken, but there was no change, he thought, in the dispositions of the lower classes; a dangerous Popish spirit had arisen; a French invasion would probably produce a rising, and many of the yeomanry and militia were disaffected.[2] I have noticed in the last chapter the remarkable letter in which McNally had warned the Government that the Orange passion and fanaticism which was rising in opposition to the United Irishmen had begun at the April assizes to invade the courts of justice. The same sagacious judge also warned them of the evil effects of the military excesses which had begun: 'I had accounts yesterday from Kildare,' he wrote, 'by eye-witnesses, of military depredations the most extraordinary, and I understand that among the Irish soldiers murmurs take place at the

[1] See p. 81.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 392, 393.

duty of distressing their countrymen.'[1] He mentions how a yeoman had gone to the house of a lawyer in Dublin to search for a green bottle-stand with the label Erin-go-Bragh; how he had vainly searched the house in hopes of finding it; how fifty lashes were given to the servant of the house, and how there was much reason to believe that this wanton outrage was due to a simple motive of private revenge.[2] 'All that Colonel Duff and Fitzgerald (the Sheriff of Tipperary) have done at Nenagh,' he said in another letter, 'is known in Dublin—such as the public whippings and confessions, &c., and the pointed manner in which the Catholics are distinguished. Need I say that body are bursting with vengeance?'[3] False rumours, either arising out of panic or deliberately invented for political purposes, were flying to and fro. One report was that the Government intended immediately to introduce into Parliament a Bill for effecting a legislative union.[4] Another was that they had determined to renew all the penal laws against Papists as soon as the people were disarmed. It was said that Lord Edward would appear in a few days at the head of the rebel hosts; that a great portion of the regulars as well as the militia would co-operate with him;[5] that a rebel attack upon Dublin was impending, and that it would be followed by a general massacre.[6] Dublin was proclaimed, and partly through flogging, partly through secret information, great quantities of arms were discovered both there and in the country.[7] Two days before the rebellion broke

[1] J. W., April 27, 1798.

[2] Ibid. May 21, 1798.

[3] Ibid. Undated, but no doubt a little later than the letter last cited.

[4] Ibid.

[5] F. H., May 15, 1798. Higgins says that the rumour that the Government designed to re-enact the penal code, was sent by the Dublin conspirators widely through the country, especially to the priests.

[6] J. W., May 21.

[7] See the letters of May (I.S.P.O.), and several notices in

out, Lord Clare wrote that 2,000 pikes had been already seized in Dublin, and that he had no doubt that there were still more than 10,000 concealed in it and its environs. The county of Kildare, he thought, was now nearly disarmed, for more than 4,000 pikes and 1,500 stand of firearms had been seized there.[1]

The shadow of impending rebellion hung visibly over the land, and a great part of Ireland was regarded and treated as in a state of actual war. How completely this was the case is remarkably shown by a very earnest declaration which was issued as early as May 6 by the leading Catholic gentry and clergy, including all the professors of Maynooth. It was addressed to 'the deluded people' of their persuasion 'who are now engaged in open rebellion against his Majesty's Government.' It implored them 'to return to their allegiance;' and to listen to the advice of their bishops and to the gentry of their own creed, rather than to 'a set of desperate and profligate men who are availing themselves of the want of education and experience in those whom they seek to use as instruments for gratifying their own wicked and interested views.' The writers felt themselves 'bound to rescue their names, and as far as in them lies the religion which they profess, from the ignominy which each would incur from an appearance of acquiescence in such criminal and irreligious conduct.' They declared publicly, on the eve of the struggle, their firm determination 'to stand or fall with the present existing Constitution,' and they predicted that if the rebellion triumphed it would end in the downfall of the clergy as well as of 'the ancient families and respectable commercial men of the Roman Catholic religion.'[2]

The toils, however, were gradually closing around

Faulkner's Journal for that month.

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 422.

[2] Plowden, ii. 679. 680.

the few leading conspirators who were still at large, and of these the most important was Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The Government were perfectly aware of his treason, though they had as yet no evidence which they could produce in the law courts against him. They knew his negotiations with France; they knew from Reynolds, from McNally, and probably from others the leading part he was taking in the military organisation of the conspiracy, and shortly before the arrests at Bond's Lord Clare had said to one of his relations, 'For God's sake get this young man out of the country; the ports shall be thrown open to you, and no hindrance whatever offered.'[1] All warnings, however, and all remonstrances were thrown away upon him; it was soon well known to the Government that he was to be at the head of an immediate insurrection, and his arrest became a matter of the first public importance.

Towards the end of 1797 Higgins discovered that an obscure and needy Catholic barrister named Magan, who was connected with the conspiracy, was prepared to sell secret information to the Government.[2] As he was a member of a baronial committee and acquainted with some of the leading conspirators,[3] his offer was readily accepted,[4] and it was soon found that he could

[1] Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 58 (3rd edition).

[2] The first mention of him in the I.S.P.O. is, I think, in a letter of Higgins, Nov. 24, 1797. On Jan. 5, 1798, Higgins says he had not seen Magan since, but will 'fix him to meet you at dinner at 6 P.M. to-morrow, and shall in the course of this day or in the morning give you a hint of his terms.' The addresses of these letters are not given, but they were probably written either to Cooke or Pollock.

[3] F. H., Feb. 6, 1798.

[4] 'I suppose M. will call on you. He was with me this day, and seemed as if I had received a second 100*l.* for him. For God's sake send it, and don't let me appear in so awkward a situation.' (F. H., March 15.) When the part played by this informer became important, his name was never given in full. He was spoken of simply as M., and an important letter is endorsed

render assistance of the utmost importance.[1] On April 22 he wrote to Cooke: 'I did not receive your promised favour till Easter Monday last, and on reading your letter requested Mr. H. to know your leisure for an interview. . . . He wrote me a most pressing letter not to leave town. . . . At the risk of my personal safety I accompanied him in a carriage to your door. . . . I have all along had in contemplation to put you in possession of some act that would essentially serve the Government as well as the country, and it may not be very long till such is effected. At present, perhaps, you may not know that Lord Edward lurks about town and its vicinity; he with Nelson was a few days ago in the custody of a patrol or party in the neighbourhood of Lucan, but not being known and assuming other names, they were not detained for any length of time. Nelson is now the most active man, and affects, if he really does not hold, the first situation. For my part I sometimes imagine he is the person that communicated with Government; however, suspicion has not pointed at him. His absence, I know, at the present moment would be considered as very fatal to the cause in Dublin. I have just this moment heard Lord Edward has been mostly in Thomas Street.' The remainder of the letter is devoted to the more general prospects of the society and to the assurance of immediate aid which, as I have already mentioned, had come from the French Direc-

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'Mag.,' but the handwriting of letters written by him is clearly the same as that of one or two later letters signed Francis Magan, and the correspondence generally took place through Higgins.

[1] 'This night there is to be a meeting at Lawless's. I shall learn to-morrow the nature of it. I would wish to put you in possession of something M. knows of, that you may ask and interrogate him about them (*sic*), and let him agree to come to a fixed point of information. I know it is (or will be from his late election) in his power.' (F. H., March 28.)

tory.[1] A week later Higgins wrote that he knew from unquestionable authority that Lord Edward Fitzgerald was in Dublin waiting to take the command of the Leinster legions, and that the rising was to take place on old May-day, and he adds: 'If you can see M. this night you can bring out where Lord Edward is concealed.' 'What hour shall I bring M. this night, if your leisure will permit? Remember to bring him to a point—I mean about Lord Edward.'[2]

Something, however, occurred to prevent the capture of Lord Edward. He appears at this time to have frequently changed his abode. As Government had obtained more certain intelligence of the impending revolt, the pursuit became more severe, and on May 11 a proclamation was issued offering a reward of 1,000*l.* for his apprehension.[3] On the 15th Higgins wrote a long letter to Cooke, in the course of which he said: 'M. seems mortified that when he placed matters within the reach of Government the opportunity was neglected.'[4] Higgins adds that a meeting had been held on Friday night at the house of a man named Murphy in Parliament Street, that letters had been sent out to many parts of the country, and that in a few days Lord

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[1] Anonymous letter to Cooke endorsed 'Mag.,' Stephen's Green, April 22, 1798. On the arrest of Lord Edward and Neilson near the borders of the county Kildare, see Madden, ii. 406, 408; Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 80. Neilson's name is often spelt 'Nelson' in the correspondence of the time.

[2] F. H., May 1, 1798.

[3] Madden, ii. 411.

[4] The letter goes on: 'The strange story Neilson told of receiving a message to wait on you by Hyde, and the answer he returned, induces M. to believe Neilson communicates with you, or that he dare not have sent any such kind of message. If so, M. says Neilson is playing a double game, for not only in every club and society or company he is vociferous in the abuse of Government—how they broke word and faith with him, as they do with every person who should unhappily place confidence in them.'

Edward would appear at the head of a rebellion. 'Lord Edward,' he concludes, 'skulks from house to house—has watches and spies around, who give an account of any danger being near. It is intended he shall go into the country (it is thought Kildare) and make a rising. Give me leave to remind you of sending to M.'[1]

It is a strange and even mysterious thing that Fitzgerald had not before been arrested; and it can only be accounted for by the extreme languor of the search before May 11. Neilson and Lawless, who were well known, and several other more obscure conspirators, appear to have been continually about him, and he seems to have acted with the utmost rashness. More than once he visited his wife in disguise, and, as we have seen, it was known to the authorities that he especially haunted Thomas Street. He had been there in the house of a feather merchant named Murphy—the house in which he was ultimately captured—for about a fortnight. He subsequently stayed in the house of another feather merchant named Cormick in the same street, and he had a third place of concealment in that street in the private dwelling of a public-house keeper named Moore. It is scarcely possible that he can have remained so long in this neighbourhood, frequently accompanied by ten or twelve friends who acted as a bodyguard, without the fact being widely known, and Fitzgerald appears to have come to a rather remarkable extent in contact with men who gave information to the Government. Reynolds, as we have seen, had twice visited him after his flight, but it was his obvious wish to assist his escape. A man named John Hughes, who was certainly at one time an informer, had dined with him at Cormick's house on April 20, and Cox, the former editor of the 'Union Star,' was also much about

[1] F. H., May 15.

him. After the offer of the reward the danger was manifestly greater, but Fitzgerald did not abandon his old haunts. On the night of May 17 he was sleeping in the house of Moore.[1]

In a long unsigned information, dated May 17, addressed to Cooke, some unknown writer mentions that he had been the whole day on foot, had traced his 'friend' without knowing at first where 'he was to be brought to;' and at last 'had his meeting' at a pastry-cook's near Grafton Street. He had learnt that a plan was formed for a rising on Wednesday or Thursday night; that it was to take place in the North two days before the Leinster rising, in order to draw off the troops from Dublin. It was hoped that 45,000 men from Wicklow, Kildare, and the county of Dublin could then be brought together to capture the metropolis. The first object would be to seize the money in the bank. The informant then speaks of two public-houses in Thomas Street which he had visited, and says that he would meet his friends 'early in the morning to obtain further information.'[2]

The attention of Dublin was at this moment for a brief space diverted from all other subjects by a melancholy pageant which was taking place in the Parliament. The Earl of Kingston had lately shot Colonel Fitzgerald, who, with circumstances that were peculiarly dishonourable, had seduced his daughter, and on May 18 he was put on his trial for murder, before his peers. It was the third time in the eighteenth century that such

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[1] Madden has traced Lord Edward's movements during his concealment with great care and minuteness. He has made, however, one important mistake. He says (ii. 406) that on May 17, Fitzgerald had taken up his abode at Murphy's. It is clear from the statement of Murphy (p. 412) that he had not.

[2] Information May 17. Endorsed 'Sproule.' This seems to have no connection with Higgins and Magan.

a scene had been enacted in the Irish House of Lords. Lord Santry had been tried and convicted of murder in 1739. Lord Netterville had been tried and acquitted in 1743. Everything was now done to enhance the solemnity of the trial. All the Lords of the kingdom were summoned, and few were absent. They walked in their robes of state in solemn procession from the House of Lords to the colonnade in front of the building, and thence to the House of Commons, which had been fitted up for the occasion. The Lord Chancellor, bearing a white wand and seated in the Speaker's chair, presided as High Steward. The temporal peers were ranged on his left, and the spiritual peers on his right. The judges in their robes occupied the table in the centre. A brilliant audience, including the peeresses and their daughters, and the Commons with their families and friends, filled every available space. The accused, clad in deep mourning, was brought from the Castle. He entered the house with his eyes fixed on the ground, knelt as he heard the charge and pleaded not guilty. The King-at-Arms in his party-coloured robe preceded him, bearing the Kingston arms emblazoned on a shield, and close by stood the executioner, holding his axe, but with the edge averted from the prisoner.

The great provocation under which Lord Kingston had acted had given him the warm sympathies of the spectators, and there was a deep and anxious suspense when the witnesses for the prosecution were three times called. But though the wife and children of the deceased man were summoned, no accuser appeared, and an acquittal became inevitable. The peers adjourned to their own house. The bishops claimed their old privilege of not voting on a question of life and death. The lay peers returned in procession to the Commons, and unanimously pronounced their brother peer not guilty,

and Lord Clare, having announced the verdict, broke his wand and dissolved the assembly.[1]

The pageant, as it appears, might have had a very different termination. On that day a most important letter came from Higgins. It began with a detailed account of a meeting which had taken place on the preceding night, when letters were read from the country censuring the organised United Irishmen of the city for not having yet made a single effort. A proposal was then made to attack the Chancellor and peers when they were assembled for the trial. It appears to have been suggested by Lord Edward. It was discussed at length, and at last negatived by a majority of two.[2] Higgins adds that an alternative plan for an attack on the Castle was then proposed and adopted, 'consented to by Lord Edward and those who now form the secret committee or directory, and is set down to take

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[1] An interesting account of this trial was sent by Bishop Percy to his wife (May 18). See, too, Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, i. 195–201. The circumstances of the death of Col. Fitzgerald are related in the *Annual Register*, 1797, pp. 55, 56.

[2] It appears from a later letter that Magan not only furnished this information, but also played a great part in the decision. After the death of Lord Edward, Higgins wrote: 'When I waited on you early in the last month and told you of the intention of the rebels to rise on the 14th ult., you could scarcely be brought to credit such. However, it turned out a most happy circumstance that Lord Edward was then with M., who found means to prevail on him to postpone his bloody purpose in the city. Else on the day of Earl Kingston's trial you would have had a shocking scene of blood and havoc in the city. I should not have used the word prevail, because Lord Edward's purpose was put to a vote and carried by M.'s negative only.' (F. H., June 30, 1798.) In another letter, probably referring to this, Higgins takes much credit to himself. 'Sure I am if I had not prevailed upon the person to come forward and act in the manner he did when the first attack was intended at the H. of C., the nobility and Government as well as the city of Dublin would have been involved in a scene of blood.' (F. H., June 24.) He recurs to the same subject July 12, 1798.

place some night in the next week. M. thinks it is on the ensuing Tuesday or Wednesday, but will be certain for your information.'[1] Having given this important intelligence, Higgins proceeded to indicate in detail, on the authority of his friend, the place where that night Lord Edward might be found.

The place pointed out was on the road from Thomas Street, where Lord Edward was now concealed, to Usher's Island, where Magan lived, and there is some

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[1] Higgins goes on in his broken, ungrammatical style: 'Neilson and others have so prejudiced his mind against any promise made by Government, and of their breaking faith with those who serve their cause, after the service is rendered, that my utmost exertions have been directed to keep M. steady, who says the 300*l.* promised should have been given at once; but only giving two—and such a long interval between, as made him conceive Neilson's assertion true—and that he then was, and would still be further neglected. However, I have given him leave to draw upon me, and fully satisfied him of the honourable intentions of Government where service was actually performed, and of your kind attention if he would go forward among the meetings, communicate what is transacting, and if found necessary point out the spot where they may be seized, &c. This he has at length agreed to do. . . . I also mentioned your kind promise of obtaining 1,000*l.* for him (without the mention of his name or enrolment of it in any book) on having the business done, which he pointed out before the issuing of the proclamation. He therefore puts himself on your honour not to admit of any person to come and search his house (which, I ventured to promise, you would have observed), but to place watches after dusk, this night near the end of Watling Street or two houses up in that street from Usher's Island, another towards the Queen's bridge, and a third in Island Street, the rear of the stables near Watling Street, and which leads up towards Thomas Street and Dirty Lane, and at one of these places they will find Lord Edward disguised. He wears a wig and may have been otherwise metamorphosed, attended by one or two, but *fol*lowed by several armed banditti with new daggers. He intends to give battle if not suddenly seized. Lady Egality complains dreadfully about Lord Castlereagh ordering a short passport. She will have letters sewed or quilted in her clothes, and goes to Hamburgh. I shall send you particulars.' (F. H., May 18, 1798.)

reason to believe that the intention was to arrest him when he was going to the house and on the invitation of his betrayer.[1] Major Sirr at the head of a party was present at the appointed hour, and the two parties encountered. A confused scuffle took place in the dark, narrow, tortuous streets. Sirr was knocked down. Lord Edward escaped and made his way to the house of Murphy in Thomas Street, where he had been formerly concealed, and where he intended to remain through the 19th.

The extreme fatuity with which the conspiracy was conducted is curiously shown by the fact that on this very day, on which the most careful concealment was so imperatively required, the brilliant uniform which Fitzgerald was to wear at the rising, was sent to the house of Murphy. Neilson, who had been sixteen months in prison, and was therefore well known to the authorities, called there in the course of the morning. The street was swarming with soldiers, who were well aware that Lord Edward must be in the neighbourhood, and a public-house belonging to Moore was searched. In spite of all this Neilson came a second time to the house in the broad daylight of the afternoon, stopped with Fitzgerald to dinner, then left the house, it is said, very abruptly, and did not even shut the hall-door behind him.[2]

A few minutes after his departure, Major Sirr, accompanied by Major Swan, Captain Ryan, and eight or nine private soldiers, arrived. As the door had been

[1] This is stated by Mr. Fitzpatrick on the authority of a member of the Moore family in Thomas Street, with whom Lord Edward stayed. (See *Sham Squire*, pp. 110–114.) According to the earlier biographers of Fitzgerald he was going to Moira House, where his wife was, and which was in the immediate neighbourhood of Magan's house.

[2] See Murphy's narrative in Madden's *United Irishmen*, ii. 414, 415; Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 85–87.

left open they entered without noise, resistance, or delay, but Sirr remained with the soldiers below to prevent a rescue or an escape, while Swan and Ryan mounted the staircase. Swan first entered the room where Fitzgerald and Murphy were. The latter remained completely passive, but Fitzgerald sprang from the bed on which he was lying, and brandishing a very formidable dagger, attacked and wounded Swan. The details of the conflict that ensued have been somewhat variously related. The wounded man fired a pocket pistol at Fitzgerald, but missed his aim, and, according to the account of Murphy, he then rushed out of the room to summon the soldiers to his aid. Whether he left it or not, it is certain that Ryan, armed only with a sword-cane, now grappled most courageously with Fitzgerald, and although he speedily received a mortal wound in his stomach, and was again and again stabbed, he clung to his prisoner till the soldiers arrived. They found Ryan bathed in blood and rapidly sinking, and Fitzgerald stood so fiercely at bay that Sirr fired in self-defence. The ball lodged in Fitzgerald's right arm near the shoulder; he staggered for a moment, and then struggling desperately was seized and captured.[1]

[1] Madden has printed the account of Murphy, who was in the room during the earlier part of the arrest, and he has also reprinted from the *Castlereagh Correspondence* the account given by the son of Ryan, who received it from his father. They agree remarkably, and I have followed them in the text. In the *Life of Reynolds* (ii. 230–236) there is another account which the biographer says his father received from Sirr and Swan, and which was published in the lifetime of the former. It differs in several small particulars from the narratives of Murphy and Ryan. Neither in the account by Reynolds nor in that given by Moore in his *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald* is any mention made of Swan's having quitted the room. The widow of Ryan, afterwards writing to the Irish Government about a pension, said: 'My poor husband often told me that had he not determined to take Lord Edward at all events, whether he forfeited his life or not, he was certain he would have escaped through the window, which

The capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald was undoubtedly due to the information which was furnished by Magan through Higgins. It was owing to them that he had been obliged to take refuge in Murphy's house on the night of the 18th, and they had clearly pointed out the quarter of Dublin in which he was concealed. I do not, however, think that it was they who indicated the particular house. There is no trace of any communication having been received from them on the 19th, and Major Sirr afterwards stated that he only obtained the information of the hiding place of Lord Edward a few minutes before he went there.[1] It is probable that the fact of Neilson, who was well known to be a constant companion of Fitzgerald, having been

had a communication with the other houses, as he was left above fifteen minutes without assistance.' (July 14, 1798, I.S.P.O.) The last sentence is no doubt an enormous exaggeration, but in such moments seconds appear like minutes. In another letter Mrs. Ryan says her husband was left alone with Fitzgerald ten minutes after he was wounded. (July 29, 1798.) Camden's account gives the impression of Swan having had the more prominent part in the arrest (Camden to Portland, May 20, 1798), and Beresford and Cooke both represent Ryan as having only come in towards the end of the scuffle, and just before the arrival of the soldiers. *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 414, 418. See, too, *Faulkner's Journal*, May 22, 1798.

[1] Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 86. Beresford said that Sirr went to Murphy's house 'to search for pikes, upon a vague idea that Lord E. Fitzgerald had been there or in the next house.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 414.) In the account in Reynolds's biography it is stated that on the day before the arrest Cooke informed Major Sirr that if he would go on the following day between five and six in the evening to the house of Murphy in Thomas Street he would find Fitzgerald there. (Reynolds's *Life*, ii. 229.) I believe, however, this account to be inaccurate. There is nothing in the information of Higgins about Murphy's house. The expectation was that Fitzgerald would be arrested in the street on the night of the 18th, and it was with this object that Sirr acted. Murphy said that he was told that one of Lord Edward's bodyguard gave some information, and there were various other rumours. Compare Madden, ii. 424; Fitzpatrick's *Sham Squire*, pp. 122, 123.

seen to leave Murphy's house, furnished the clue, and it is tolerably certain that many of the neighbours must have known that this house had been for a considerable time the hiding place of the rebel chief. It is not surprising that grave suspicions of treachery should have attached to Neilson, but they are, I believe, unfounded. Neilson, though he is one of the heroes of a class of popular writers in Ireland, is not a man deserving of any respect. He had been released from prison in the preceding February on condition that 'he should not belong to any treasonable committee,' but immediately after the arrest at Bond's house he broke his promise and became one of the most active organisers of the conspiracy.[1] He was a drunkard, and therefore peculiarly likely to have betrayed a secret, and the letters I have quoted appear to me to establish a strong probability that he either had, or intended to have, some secret communication with the Government. Two facts, however, are quite sufficient to acquit him of the charge of having deliberately betrayed Fitzgerald. Major Sirr discovered that he was one of the chief organisers of a desperate plot to rescue the prisoner,[2] and the promised

[1] Madden, iv. 52, 57–70.

[2] Ibid. ii. 408, 440; iv. 58. Neilson was again arrested on account of this plot. Higgins wrote: 'Your supposed quondam communicator, Neilson, had an interview with a military committee on Friday last and a further one on Tuesday—by a military committee I mean a number of militia men and soldiers united in the infernal cause of murder—who received directions from Neilson how to act. . . . Surely you could get much information from this infamous renegade villain, who, I believe, has promised you information (as every good subject ought) how to meet the plans and counteract the designs of rebels; but he has gone from one quarter of the country to the other, and to the most remote . . . inculcating rebellion. . . . Neilson, therefore, can develop almost every plan.' (F. H., May 25, 1798.) It is probable that Neilson, in communicating with the Government, only did so to betray them. In February Higgins wrote: 'Neilson made communications to Bond (and through him to all the leaders

1,000*l.* was duly, though tardily, paid through Higgins to Magan.

The capture was a matter of transcendent importance, for the insurrection was planned for the 23rd, and Fitzgerald was to be its commander. There is not, indeed, the smallest reason to believe that Fitzgerald had any of the qualities of a great man, or was in the least likely to have led his country to any high or honourable destiny. But he was a well-known public man. He was a Protestant. He was a member of a great aristocratic family, and if he had appeared at the head of the rebellion, it is extremely probable that the northern rebels would have risen at his call, though they remained almost passive when they found the rebellion in Leinster headed by fanatical priests and by obscure country gentlemen of whom they had never heard. In that case the sea of blood which in the next months deluged a few counties would have probably overspread the whole island. From this great calamity Ireland was saved by the arrest of May 19. Of the two men who were concerned in furnishing the information, different judgments must be formed. Higgins was an open, prominent, consistent loyalist, who betrayed no one in rendering this great service to his country. Magan, as far as appears, was a simple informer. Whether any motives higher and better than a mere desire for gain inspired him, we have no means of judg-

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of the infernal conspiracy) of your visiting him, and of the various questions you asked. . . . It was resolved at their meeting that if their cause succeeded, Neilson should be the first object of reward;' and in a later letter: 'If Neilson is not bringing you information he is a most dangerous person to remain here. He has dined, supped, &c. among the entire of the party.' (F. H., Feb. 21, March 15, 1798.) It appears certain that if the United Irish leaders had not afterwards made a compact with the Government, Neilson would have been tried, and the Government had much hope of convicting him.

ing.[1] On the very night in which Lord Edward was arrested, he was elected a member of the head committee of the United Irishmen.

'On the announcement of Lord Edward being taken,' Higgins wrote on the following morning, 'the butchers in Patrick's Street Market and a number from the Liberty, it seems, got pikes at Carman Hall, Garden Lane, and Hanover Lane to attempt a rescue, but on finding the prisoner had been removed they desisted.' Higgins adds that the armed bodyguard who usually accompanied Lord Edward were carousing at a house in Queen's Street at the time of the arrest; that Fitzgerald had intended to go down to Finglass on the following night; that on Thursday night he was to have taken the command of a great body of assembled rebels, with the intention of at once marching at their head upon Dublin. 'The sacking of Beresford's bank, burning the custom-house, seizing the Castle, &c., was determined on. . . . M. recommends the most strict watchfulness of persons going out and coming in the different avenues of the city. To-morrow he will send further information. He was elected last night of the committee. I had a great deal of exertion to go through to keep him steady, and was obliged last week to ad-

[1] Mr. Fitzpatrick, who has thrown more light than any other writer upon the career of Magan, has discovered one very curious fact. Magan's father had borrowed 1,000*l.* from a gentleman named Fetherston, for which the latter held a joint bond from father and son. The elder Magan died insolvent, and the creditor gave up all expectation of repayment. Some years later, when the original creditor was dead, Francis Magan appeared unsolicited at the house of his son and paid the debt. Mr. Fetherston was extremely surprised, as he had made no demand for the payment, and as he knew that Magan was at this time a poor man and entirely without practice at the bar. It would be curious to know whether the transaction took place shortly after the arrest of Lord Edward. See Mr. Fitzpatrick's *Sham Squire*, p. 130.

vance him money: as I also stand pledged in the business to him in the payment of the 1,000*l.* or otherwise, have the goodness to let it be done immediately, and do away the improper impression he has received of the performance of Government promises.'[1]

Lord Edward Fitzgerald was removed to Newgate, and confined in a cell which had lately been occupied by Lord Aldborough. The vicissitudes of that sick-bed have been followed by several generations of Irish readers and writers with an intensity of interest hardly bestowed on any other page of Irish history. On the first day he suffered greatly from the inflammation of his wound, but it was soon relieved by suppuration; it was then believed for several days that he would recover, but fever, brought on and aggravated by anxiety of mind, set in. The death of Ryan, which took place on Thursday, the 31st, made an ignominious death the almost certain result of a trial, and it probably had a great part in hastening the catastrophe.[2] The Govern-

[1] F. H., May 20. Compare, too, his letter, June 30. On June 5, Higgins writes: 'I cannot do anything with M. until you are pleased to settle, though I advanced him money.' On the 8th he writes: 'I cannot get from M. a single sentence of who assumes a Directory. I have so frequently put him off about the payment of the 1,000*l.* that he thinks I am humbugging him. I do entreat, dear sir, as I stand pledged in this business (however badly I am used myself), you will not longer delay having it settled for M.' On the 18th of the same month he writes: 'You were so kind as to say that you would immediately obtain what was promised to M.' On June 20 the sum was paid to Higgins, and appears in the list of secret-service money: 'F. H., discovery of L. E. F., 1,000*l.*' See Madden, i. 371. Magan had some later communications with the Government directly, or through Higgins. He especially exerted his influence to have the soldiers removed from the house of a lady where they appear to have been living at free quarters, and he wrote about a sum of 500*l.* which Cooke had promised him.

[2] Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 132. Lord Clare afterwards said: 'For some days he seemed to recover, until having taken a sudden turn he died very unexpectedly of water on his chest.' (Debate on Sept. 3.) See *Faulkner's Journal*, Sept. 4, 1798.

ment determined that in the very dangerous condition of affairs no friends or relations should be admitted to persons confined for treason, and they refused till the last moments to relax their rule. They offered, however, to permit Lord Edward to see the family chaplain, which he declined, but he saw and prayed with the chaplain of the gaol. On Friday he became much worse. On Saturday there was an execution in the gaol that agitated him greatly. He prayed fervently that God would pardon and receive all who fell in the cause. On Sunday morning he seemed a little better, but the improvement was slight and transient, and on that day his aunt, Lady Louisa Conolly, received a message from the doctor that he was dying.

This lady, whose rare gifts of mind and character made a deep impression on her contemporaries, was sister of the Duke of Richmond, and wife of one of the most important members of the Irish Parliament. She was deeply attached to Lord Edward, and she at once came from Castletown to Dublin in hope of seeing him for the last time. She was accompanied by her niece, Miss Emily Napier, who has written a singularly interesting account of what occurred. They drove first to the Viceregal Lodge in the Phœnix Park, to ask permission from Lord Camden. Lady Louisa entered alone, but soon returned in a state of extreme agitation, saying that although she had even knelt at the feet of the Lord Lieutenant he had refused her, declaring that neither the Speaker nor the Chancellor would approve of any relaxation of the rule. Orders had been given to the coachman to return to the country, when Miss Napier suggested that her aunt should apply to the Chancellor, who had always been her warm admirer. The suggestion was adopted. Lord Clare happened to be dining at home, and he at once received Lady Louisa with great kindness, told her that although the Lord

Lieutenant had refused her, and although the orders were peremptory, he would take the responsibility of admitting her, and would himself accompany her to the gaol. With a thoughtful kindness he suggested that they should first drive to Leinster House and take up Lord Henry, the favourite brother of Lord Edward, who had hitherto been denied access to the prisoner. Lord Clare and Lord Henry Fitzgerald drove first in Lord Clare's carriage, followed by Lady Louisa Conolly and her niece. At the door of the prison Lord Clare said that he must restrict his permission to the aunt and brother, and Miss Napier was driven back to Leinster House to await their return.[1] They were but just in time. Lord Edward at first knew them, but soon after became delirious. He died early on the morning of June 4.[2]

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[1] I am indebted to the kindness of Lady Bunbury for my knowledge of Miss Napier's very interesting unpublished narrative. Sir W. Napier in a letter to Dr. Madden (ii. 454, 455) described, though with less simplicity, the part played by Camden and Clare in this matter.

[2] Lord Castlereagh in an interesting letter of Wickham (June 4, 1798, Record Office) describes the last days of Lord Edward's life. See, too, Camden to Portland, June 4; a letter of Elliot to Pelham in the Pelham MSS., and a letter of Beresford to Auckland (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 442, 443). Lady Louisa Conolly related the particulars of her interview with her dying nephew in a letter to Mr. Ogilvie, which is printed in Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 135–139. Lord Clare alluded to this scene with much good feeling in a speech in the House of Lords, Sept. 3. Miss Napier writes that, returning home after the death of Lord Edward, Lady Louisa Conolly related to her the circumstances of the last interview as she had stated them in her letter to Mr. Ogilvie, 'adding that nothing could exceed Lord Clare's kindness; that he had allowed nobody to remain in the room but himself; had walked away from the bed on which the poor sufferer lay so as not to hear anything that passed between them, and in short had shown her the tenderness of a brother rather than a friend, and with all his apparent sternness of manner had cried like a woman when he saw him dying.' She adds: 'As I was the sole witness of this melancholy transaction, and that it is not generally known

The capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald was immediately followed by the annihilation of the new Directory through the arrest of the two Sheares's and the flight of Lawless. Their arrest, as is well known, was due to information given by Captain Armstrong of the King's County Militia—a regiment which had the reputation of containing many disaffected men, and which was then quartered in a camp that had been formed at Lehaunstown or Loughlinstown, about seven miles from Dublin. Armstrong had for a long time been accustomed to frequent the shop of a Dublin bookseller named Byrne, who was himself a United Irishman and a great publisher of political pamphlets. It does not appear that in going there he had the smallest intention of becoming either a rebel or an informer; but he was a man of literary tastes, and was accustomed to buy all the political pamphlets that appeared. He was an ardent reader of Paine, for whose religious and political views he seems to have felt and expressed a great speculative admiration, and he talked freely, and, as he himself acknowledged, indiscreetly, about the badness of the Government, or at least of the system of taxation in Ireland. All this might have taken place, and probably did take place, without any intention of deception or any political design, but it is not surprising that it led Byrne to look upon his acquaintance as a political sympathiser. The seduction of the militia was at this time one of the first objects of the party.

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how entirely it was owing to Lord Clare's better feeling that this last interview between my poor cousin and his aunt and brother was permitted, I have felt that it is but justice to his memory to record it.' (Account of the death of Lord E. Fitzgerald written by Miss Emily Napier.) A letter from Lady Louisa Conolly to Lord Camden (June 8) (also in the possession of Lady Bunbury), mentions that Lord Edward was buried at eleven at night in St. Werburgh's Church. A single carriage and an escort of twelve yeomen attended his remains.

Great numbers of private soldiers had been sworn in, but very few of the officers had betrayed their trust, and if an officer in a regiment which was already largely permeated by disaffection could be induced to turn traitor, his services might be peculiarly valuable. Byrne imagined that Armstrong would prove a useful instrument, and he asked him if he had any objection to be introduced to Mr. Sheares.

Armstrong had never seen either of the brothers, and he at once consented. On reflecting, however, on what he had done, he formed a strong opinion, either from the manner of Byrne, or from the reputation of Sheares, or from something which was said in the course of the conversation, that the object was to engage him in the United Irish plot,[1] and he felt that the path before him was a dubious and a dangerous one. The course which he adopted was to go to the colonel of his regiment, and to another officer in whom he had full confidence, and to place himself unreservedly in their hands. He told them the request that had been made to him, and the construction he put on it. He confessed frankly that he had spoken imprudently and indiscreetly, and he asked them to direct his conduct. They both said that it was his duty to see the conspirators, and if their object was what he supposed, to pretend so far to accede to it as to unravel the plot. The business was not of his seeking. He had never wished or asked to play the part of a spy, but if an unlooked-for chance placed in his hands the threads of a most dangerous conspiracy, and enabled him to avert or defeat a for-

[1] Toler in his speech for the prosecution said that Byrne spoke of the Sheares's as men of talent, who were engaged in their country's cause, and who were satisfied that Armstrong could contribute to their assistance. But this is not borne out by Armstrong's published evidence. See the trial in Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xxvii.

midable and sanguinary rebellion, he could not, they said, without a failure of duty, shrink from the task. Besides his duty to his King and country, he had a duty to his regiment; and it was to avail himself of every means of discovering how far the conspiracy had really infected it.

Such were the views of Colonel L'Estrange[1] and of Captain Clibborn, and after the tragedy was completed all the brother officers of Armstrong supported them, by signing a testimonial in which they expressed their full approbation of his conduct. Armstrong acted on their advice. He was introduced to Henry and John Sheares as a man on whom they could fully rely, and the whole story soon came out. He learnt that the conspirators had now determined that it was no longer possible to wait for the French, but that an immediate rebellion must be attempted; that it was to begin with an almost simultaneous attempt to surprise the camp at Lehaunstown, to seize the artillery at Chapelizod and to capture Dublin, and that John Sheares was to go down to Cork to organise the rebellion in the South. He learnt also that the military organisation was now complete, all the captains and adjutants being appointed; that there were some United Irishmen in every regiment which had been in Dublin for the last two years, and that a meeting had lately been held of deputies from nearly every militia regiment in Ireland, including

[1] It is not clear from Armstrong's sworn evidence that Col. L'Estrange was consulted until after the first interview of Armstrong with the Sheares's, though from that time Armstrong undoubtedly acted under his direction and with his full approbation. The statement in the text, however, is based upon that of the Attorney-General (Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 298), and it is confirmed by Armstrong's statement to Madden: 'I put myself under the direction of my colonel and my friend. I acted by their advice, and if I have done anything wrong, they are more culpable than I.' (*United Irishmen*, iv. 374.)

that of Armstrong himself. It was believed by the conspirators that all, or nearly all, those regiments would ultimately join the insurgents. Deputies from several different regiments had already promised recruits for the rebel army, some ten, some twenty, some thirty, some one hundred men, provided they had sufficient notice, but no impression had been made upon the officers. In one street through which the soldiers were likely to pass in order to attack the insurgents, so many houses had been secured that a deadly fire was likely to take place. At the outset of the rebellion the Lord Lieutenant was to be seized in the Castle, and all the privy councillors in their private houses, and in this way, it was thought, organised resistance would be paralysed. The rising at Cork and the rising in other places were to be so managed, that the news might reach Dublin at the same time. The task assigned to Armstrong was to bring over his regiment. In order to assist him, he was given the names of some soldiers in it who were already sworn in. He was recommended to act specially upon the Roman Catholics, and he was authorised to promise every soldier who joined the conspiracy that he should receive a portion of confiscated land in the King's County. He was himself promised the command of the regiment. The names of the Supreme Executive were not disclosed to him, and he was told that the exact day of the rising was not fixed, but that it was close at hand.

These very alarming disclosures completely confirmed the intelligence which the Government had been receiving from other sources. They were not all made at a single interview. The first took place on May 10, and immediately after, the proclamation was issued, offering a reward of 1,000*l.* for the apprehension of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Armstrong communicated what had passed not only to Colonel L'Estrange and

Captain Clibborn, but also to Lord Castlereagh and to Cooke, and he appears to have acted largely under their advice. He had several interviews with his victims, and at one of them Lawless was present. On May 20—the day after the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald—he dined with the two brothers and with members of their family. He afterwards said that he had done wrong in accepting their hospitality, but that he had done so at the urgent desire of Lord Castlereagh, who had represented to him that a time when so many lives were in jeopardy, and so terrible a catastrophe was impending, was not one for indulging in delicate scruples or neglecting any possible means of information. The next day the two brothers were arrested. In their house was found, in the handwriting of John Sheares, the draft of the proclamation to which I have already referred, urging the insurgents to give no quarter to any Irishman who resisted them.[1]

On the night before the arrest, Lawless had fled from Dublin, and he succeeded in making his way to France, where he entered the army, and rose in time to be a general under Napoleon. Byrne was arrested on the same day as the Sheares's. On the 23rd, through information given by a Catholic priest, the plot of Neilson to rescue Lord Edward Fitzgerald was discovered, and Neilson was imprisoned, though he was never brought to trial, and in this way every leader in Ireland who had any real influence was removed. On the 21st Lord Castlereagh, by the direction of the Lord Lieutenant,

[1] The facts relating to the Sheares's will be found in their trial in Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xxvii., and in Madden's *United Irishmen*. Madden, on this as on all other matters connected with the United Irishmen, writes as a most furious partisan, but he has had the honesty to print some letters of Armstrong, and notes of a conversation with him, giving the other side of the question.

wrote to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, announcing that a plot had been discovered for placing Dublin, in the course of the present week, in the hands of a rebel force, and for seizing the Executive Government and those of authority in the city, and on the following day a similar announcement was made to the House of Commons. The House responded by a very loyal address, and all the members, with the Speaker and Serjeant-at-Arms at their head, walked two and two through the streets to present it to the Lord Lieutenant. The guards in every point of danger were trebled, and every precaution was taken, as in a besieged city.

While these things were happening in Ireland, Arthur O'Connor and the four other men who had been arrested at Margate in the preceding February, were being tried at Maidstone on the charge of high treason. The evidence against them was of very different degrees. That against Binns went little further than to show that he had been actively employed in obtaining a boat for the escape of the others to France. The cases against Allen and Leary completely broke down, for the former was probably, and the second certainly, a simple servant, and there was no evidence that they were cognisant of the designs of their master. The priest O'Coigly and Arthur O'Connor were undoubtedly at Margate together, under false names, attempting to go to France. This, however, in itself only amounted to a misdemeanour, unless it could be proved that the purpose of their journey was a treasonable one. The evidence against O'Coigly was clear and conclusive, for in the pocket of his great-coat was found a most seditious address from 'the Secret Committee' in England to the French Executive, strongly and elaborately urging an invasion of England. The case against O'Connor turned mainly upon the question whether he was cognisant of this paper, and of the designs of his companion. It was

proved that he was well acquainted with him, though he had denied the fact, and he was convicted of one or two other misstatements. It was shown also that he was the principal and guiding member of the party, and that he had paid for the whole expedition, and a cipher discovered in his razor case established a strong independent evidence of treason. It had, however, no connection with the document found in the possession of O'Coigly, and it was pretended that O'Connor was flying from the country on account of private embarrassments, and had, as a matter of charity, agreed to take with him a distressed fellow-countryman, of whose character and objects he knew nothing. The trial derived a great additional interest from the appearance of nearly all the leading members of the English Opposition, including Fox, Sheridan, Erskine, Whitbread, the Duke of Norfolk, and Lord Moira, as witnesses in favour of O'Connor. They deposed that he had lived familiarly with them, and that they considered his politics substantially identical with their own. Grattan also was summoned for the defence, but his evidence was remarkably scanty. It amounted to nothing more than that O'Connor had a good and an unreserved private character, and that Grattan had never heard him express any opinion in any degree favourable to a French invasion, but rather the contrary.[1] The judge summed up decidedly in favour of all the prisoners except O'Coigly. The trial terminated on May 22. O'Coigly was found guilty of high treason. Binns, Allen, and Leary were acquitted and discharged. O'Connor was also acquitted, amid a scene of excitement and confusion such as has rarely been seen in an English court of justice,[2] but he

[1] Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 50.

[2] 'A proceeding then took place which never had an equal in Ireland. It was supposed that there was a Secretary of State's warrant to detain O'Connor, and the moment judgment of death

was detained on a warrant of the Duke of Portland, on a new charge of high treason. Fortunately for himself, and fortunately too for Ireland, he remained during the next few weeks in prison, and could take no part in the rebellion.

The Government were much dissatisfied at the acquittal of O'Connor. Wickham ascribed it mainly to the impression produced by a most scandalous letter which was brought under the notice of the court before the trial began, written by a clergyman named Arthur Young, who confessed that he had come in contact with three men who had been summoned as jurymen in the case, and had urged upon them the transcendent importance of hanging the prisoners.[1] Pollock, who had

was pronounced upon Quigly, the dock was beset and several voices were heard calling out, "The other prisoners are discharged!" "Discharge Mr. O'Connor!" In an instant he leaped from the dock. The crowd was immense, the noise prodigious, the officers of the court calling out to stop him. "Seize O'Connor!" "Stop O'Connor!" "Let O'Connor out!" &c. &c. Swords were drawn, constables' staves, sticks, bludgeons, knocking-downs, &c. The judges frightened to death almost. In short, it is scarcely possible for you to conceive such a scene. O'Connor, however, was brought back, restored to his place in the dock, and immediately after committed to gaol.' (J. Pollock, May 23, 1798.)

[1] May 23. A few days later he wrote to Cooke: 'I lament most exceedingly that the hopes I had raised as to the success of the trials should have been so soon disappointed. I am persuaded, feeble as the instrument may appear, that unfortunate letter of Arthur Young's saved the lives of all the prisoners who escaped, and it was a miracle that it did not prove the salvation of Coigly.' (Cooke to Wickham, private, May 26, 1798. R.O.) See, for Young's letter, Gurney's report of the trial, pp. 47, 48. Lord Clare's comment on this is very characteristic, and, I think, very scandalous. 'I could never see any wisdom or good policy in prancing upon Candour in the face of rebels, and I can't but wish that your Attorney-General as well as ours was less fond of mounting this jaded pony. What business had he to set aside some of his best jurymen because Mr. Young chose to write a foolish rhapsody to one of them?' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 438, 439.)

been sent over on the part of the Irish Government, considered that Leary alone ought to have been acquitted, and he believed that the judge, when charging the jury, had been unconsciously influenced and intimidated by the presence and demeanour of the leading members of the Opposition in Lords and Commons who were ranged before him.[1] O'Coigly had been much in Paris, and Wolfe Tone had formed a very unfavourable opinion of his character. The Government had long been well aware that he was steeped in treason, and a full year before his arrest McNally had informed them that he was in Ireland on a political mission, and had reported to them the tenour of his conversation.[2] He met his fate with courage and resignation, but asserted his innocence to the last. He was hanged on Penningdon Heath on June 7.

The 23rd of May, which was the day appointed for the insurrection, had arrived. The signal was to be the stopping of the mail coaches from Dublin; and although the programme was not fully carried out, those which were going to Belfast, to Athlone, to Limerick, and to Cork, were that night seized. Long before daybreak on the 24th, numerous rebel parties were in arms in the counties of Dublin, Kildare, and Meath. In Kildare, in spite of the stringent measures for disarming the people, the rising was especially formidable, and about 2.30 on the morning of the 24th a party of rebels vaguely estimated at 1,000 men, and commanded by a farmer named Michael Reynolds, whose house had lately been burnt by the soldiers, attempted to surprise and capture the important town of Naas. Lord Gosford, however, who commanded there, had been made aware of their intention, and a party of Armagh Militia with

[1] J. Pollock, May 23, 1798.

[2] J. W., Feb. 5, 1797. Higgins had been watching O'Coigly shortly before the arrest. (F. H., Jan. 12, 1798.)

a detachment of dragoon guards were ready to meet them. Three times the rebels dashed themselves desperately against the troops, who were stationed near the gaol, and three times they were repulsed. They then changed their tactics, took possession of almost every avenue into the town, fought the troops with great intrepidity for nearly three-quarters of an hour, but at last gave way, broke and fled, closely pursued by the cavalry. Hundreds of guns and pikes were brought in, either taken from the dead or cast away by the fugitives in their flight. Four prisoners only were taken, of whom three were hanged in the streets of Naas, while the fourth saved his life by giving valuable information. The loss on the King's side was variously estimated at from fourteen to thirty. Of the rebels, about thirty were believed to have been killed in the streets, and more than one hundred in the flight.[1]

Nearly at the same time, and at a distance of but a few miles from Naas, 300 rebels attacked a small garrison of yeomen and militia at Clane. But though the loyalists were surprised and immensely outnumbered, their captain, Richard Griffith, speedily rallied them, dispersed the rebels by a well-directed fire and pursued them for some distance, killing many, and burning every house in which they took refuge. Six prisoners were taken; one was condemned at the drumhead and shot at Clane; 'the other five were hanged the same day with less ceremony by the soldiers in Naas.'

About five in the morning, Griffith brought back his little body of soldiers, and he then learnt a terrible tragedy that had been enacted three miles from Clane. The small town of Prosperous, which was the centre of

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[1] Camden to Portland, May 24; Lord Gosford to General Lake, May 24, 1798; Gordon's *Hist. of the Rebellion*, pp. 74, 75; Musgrave's *Rebellions in Ireland* (2nd ed.), pp. 233, 234.

the cotton industry of Ireland, had been garrisoned by forty or fifty of the City of Cork Militia under Captain Swayne, and by twenty of the Ancient Britons. In the deadest hour of the early morning the sentinels on guard were surprised and killed. Some soldiers were slaughtered in their beds in the houses in which they were billeted, while the barracks were surrounded and set on fire. Many of the men who were in them perished by the flames or by suffocation. Some sprang from the windows and were caught upon the pikes of the assailants. The remainder tried to cut their way through the enemy, but nearly all perished. A gentleman named Stamer, who was the principal proprietor of Prosperous, and an English gentleman named Brewer, who was a prominent manufacturer, were murdered in cold blood. Several of the party, it is said, were recognised as men who on the very day before the tragedy, had come forward to profess their loyalty. to express contrition for past offences, and to receive protections from Captain Swayne.[1]

Griffith foresaw that the party from Prosperous would soon attack him, and he at once drew out his small and gallant force in Clane. He had scarcely done so when a great disorderly body of insurgents poured in. their ragged clothes strangely variegated by the scarlet uniforms and glittering helmets taken from soldiers who had perished. The loyalists were vastly outnumbered. but Griffith drew up his force in an advantageous post in the corner of a field where they could not be outflanked, and awaited the attack. The rebels opened a heavy fire, but they were evidently totally unacquainted with the use of firearms, and

[1] Musgrave has printed a deposition of one of those who escaped from Prosperous. (Appendix xv. Deposition of Thomas Davis.) See, too, Gordon's *Hist. of the Rebellion*, pp. 72–74.

every ball flew high above its mark. A deadly volley from the militia and the yeomen, and a fierce charge, soon put them to flight. Many were killed. 'The roads and fields,' writes Griffith, 'were instantly covered with pikes, pitchforks, sabres and some muskets. Five of the Ancient Britons, whose lives the insurgents had spared and put in the front of the battle on foot, armed only with pikes, deserted to us and gave us the horrid detail of the massacre at Prosperous. We pursued the rebels to near that town, but did not think it prudent to enter it lest we should be fired at from the houses. We therefore returned to Clane, got our men reported, and having put our wounded men on cars proceeded to Naas, whither we had received orders to march.'

Before, however, the march began, a very curious incident occurred. When the little force was first called together, many men were absent, and it was noticed that among them was Dr. Esmonde, the first lieutenant. A yeoman had strayed in and privately informed Captain Griffith that this very officer had actually commanded the rebels in the attack on Prosperous. Dr. Esmonde was brother of Sir Thomas Esmonde, the head of a conspicuous Catholic family of Wexford. He had only the Sunday before accompanied Captain Swayne to the chapel at Prosperous to exhort the people to surrender their arms, and it is even said that the very night before his treachery he had dined with his intended victim. He had succeeded in seducing some of the yeomen under his command, and had gone off in the night to lead the rebels. The yeoman who gave the information had been of the party, but his mind misgave him, and he escaped in the darkness.

Griffith had but just received this startling information, and his force was drawn out for leaving Clane, when Esmonde himself rode in, 'his hair dressed, his boots and breeches quite clean, and himself fully

accoutred,' and took his accustomed station at the right of the troop. Griffith was at first speechless with astonishment and indignation, but he soon recovered his composure, and Esmonde, fancying himself unsuspected, actually rode with the troops to Naas as second in command. When they arrived there, the captain ordered them to halt before the gaol, and at once lodged the traitor within it. Ample proof of his treachery was obtained, and he was sent to Dublin, tried and hanged.[1]

Other inconsiderable conflicts, consisting chiefly of attacks on small detachments of yeomen or militia and on the villages they occupied, took place, on the first two days of the rebellion, near Rathfarnham, Tallagh, Lucan, Lusk, Dunboyne, Barretstown, Baltinglass, and Kilcullen.[2] With very few exceptions the troops had everywhere the advantage, though at Kilcullen the pikemen succeeded in three times repelling the charge of a body of heavy cavalry under General Dundas; and in two other places the rebels victoriously attacked small detachments of troops and succeeded in plundering their baggage. At Baltinglass, twenty-nine miles to the south of Dublin, on the other hand, one hundred rebels were killed without the loss of a single loyalist. Some small towns and villages were occupied by rebels. Numerous houses were plundered, and several murders were unquestionably committed, though in the confused, contradictory, and partisan accounts of what took place, it is impossible with any confidence to estimate their number. The troops appear to have given little or no quarter to those who were found with arms in their hands, and those who were not immediately killed seem to have been either flogged to extort information, or

[1] See a long and interesting letter of Richard Griffith to Pelham (June 4, 1798) in the Pelham MSS.

[2] Gordon, pp. 71, 72; Plowden, ii. 688-695; *Faulkner's Journal*, May 26, 27, 1798.

shot or hanged in a very summary manner, often without any form of trial. Shouts of 'Down with the Orangemen!' and numerous attacks upon Protestants where Catholics were unmolested, showed the character the struggle was likely to assume with the Catholic peasantry. On the other hand, Catholics formed the great majority of the Irish militia and a considerable minority of the yeomen. The Catholic Lord Fingall, at the head of some corps of yeomen chiefly of his own persuasion, took a most active and efficient part in suppressing the rebellion. A numerously signed address expressing the deepest loyalty was presented to the Lord Lieutenant by the most respectable Dublin Catholics, and Archbishop Troy at once ordered an earnest exhortation to loyalty to be read from the altar at every mass. But religious passion from the first mingled largely in the struggle, and its influence was magnified both by panic and by design, for men on both sides found it useful for their purposes to fan the flame by spreading rumours of impending religious massacres. Numbers of panic-stricken Protestants scattered over the districts in rebellion fled for protection to the towns; the yeomen and militia men who deserted to the rebels appear to have been almost exclusively Catholics, and the great majority of those who were murdered or plundered by the rebels were Protestants. The Catholics, on the other hand, were told that the Government had resolved to exterminate them, and that nothing remained for them but to sell their lives dearly.

The recent arrests had deprived the rebellion of its commander-in-chief and its Directory, and the failure of the plan for the capture of the Castle and of the governors of Ireland reduced it to a number of isolated and almost aimless outbreaks. Even after the arrest of Lord Edward, however, Higgins assured the Govern-

ment, on the excellent authority of Magan, that the plot for seizing Dublin was by no means abandoned,[1] and for some days there were abundant signs of danger. Bodies of rebels, manifestly intended to march upon the metropolis and to co-operate with a rising there, approached Dublin from many different quarters; some of them appeared at a distance of only about three miles, both at Santry and at Rathfarnham, but they were promptly attacked and speedily dispersed by the corps of fencible cavalry known as Lord Jocelyn's Foxhunters. Signal fires blazed ominously by night from many points of the Dublin and Wicklow hills. Within the city the lamplighters struck work, meaning to leave the streets in total darkness, but they were forced at the point of the bayonet to light the lamps. Crowds of domestic servants, workmen, clerks, and shopmen disappeared from their usual posts, having gone off to join the rebels. McNally warned the Government that there was much to fear from the treachery of servants, and that there was a design to stop all provisions for the city.

Martial law had been at once proclaimed, and every precaution was taken to guard against surprise. The old city watchmen, who were perfectly inadequate for such an emergency, were still suffered to call the hour, but they were deprived of their pikes and muskets, and the task of preserving order was entrusted to the yeomanry, who discharged it with a vigilance and an energy which were then universally recognised. The force in Dublin was already very powerful, and in the first fortnight of the rebellion nearly a thousand more citizens joined it, while many others might have been enrolled, if it had not been for the determination of the authorities to accept no one whose loyalty was not beyond dispute. Parties of yeomanry patrolled the streets by night, and

[1] F. H., May 24, 1798. He gave a similar warning on June 5.

guarded all the most important positions. Cannon were placed opposite Kilmainham and the new prison. Tocsins or alarm bells were set up in various parts of the town, and stringent orders were given that whenever the alarm was sounded during the night, the neighbouring householders must place lights outside their windows. The bridges on the canals that flank three sides of Dublin were removed or strongly guarded; all assemblies were forbidden, and strict orders were given, as in other proclaimed districts, that no unauthorised person should appear in the streets between nine at night and five in the morning; that all householders should post outside their doors lists of those who were within; that all those who had formerly registered their arms should send in an inventory of them to the town clerk. General Vallancy was consulted about the defence of the Castle, and recommended some additional precautions, especially the accumulation of large supplies of hand-grenades, which he considered the most effective weapons against a tumultuous attack. The brushmakers' shops were especially watched, for it was found that the long mops known as 'Pope's heads' were made use of as pike handles.

The search for arms was prosecuted with untiring vigilance, and the discovery in the course of a few days of several large stores of pikes or pike heads, and even of a few cannon, clearly showed the reality and the magnitude of the danger. Some of these arms were found concealed in carts, as they were being moved from one part of the city to the other, and others in the search of suspected houses; but the discovery, in most cases, was due either to secret information or to confessions that were extorted under the lash. Courts-martial were daily held, and many persons were hanged in the barracks or over Carlisle bridge; 124 suspected rebels were sent on a single day to the tender. The bodies of many

rebels who had been sabred in the fights round Dublin were brought into the town on carts and exposed in the Castle yard.

The proclamation issued by the Lord Lieutenant and Council directed the generals commanding his Majesty's forces to punish all persons acting, aiding, or in any way assisting in the rebellion, according to martial law, 'either by death or otherwise, as they shall deem most expedient.' This proclamation was at once laid before the House of Commons and unanimously sanctioned. One member even spoke of giving it a retrospective action, and executing under it the political prisoners who were now under arrest, but the suggestion, though it was received with some applause, was happily not pressed to a division. The flogging of suspected persons in order to discover arms was practised openly and avowedly, and it proved exceedingly efficacious, and there was, as might have been expected, some unauthorised violence. The house of a prominent rebel named Byrne, who had been killed at Tallagh, and a house near Townshend Street in which arms were discovered, were burnt to ashes; and when Bishop Percy two days after the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald drove down to Thomas Street to see the spot where it occurred, he found the soldiers busily engaged in burning in the middle of the street, piles of furniture taken from tradesmen's houses in which pikes had been discovered. McNally complained bitterly that he could not appear without insult in the streets; and his own house was searched and a silver cup was taken.[1]

On the whole, however, the most striking feature of the time, in Dublin, was the energy and the prompti-

[1] In addition to the Government correspondence and the ordinary histories of the rebellion, I have made use of *Saunders's Newsletter* and *Faulkner's Journal*, and of the letters of Bishop Percy.

tude with which the citizens armed and organised themselves for the protection of their city. The real public spirit, manhood, and intelligence of the Irish people in those dreary days must not be looked for among the ignorant, half-starved rebels who were plundering and wasting the country, but much rather in the loyalists who rose by thousands to subdue them; who again and again scattered bodies ten times as numerous as themselves, and who, even before the arrival of English troops, had broken the force of the rebellion. Dublin was no doubt full of rebels and conspirators, but they were completely cowed, and under the swift stern measures of martial law they shrank into obscurity. All the loyal classes were under arms. Bankers, merchants, shopkeepers, students of the university, and even some clergymen, were hastily enrolled. A circular was issued by the archbishop to his clergy expressly authorising them to assume the military character.[1] There was a special corps of barristers, and it is said that no less than 800 attorneys enlisted in the yeomanry.[2] At the opening of Trinity term, the bar, the juries, and the attorneys appeared almost without exception in military uniform, and Judge Downes informed them that as almost every duty that could now employ men in the city was military, he would detain them as short a time as possible; that no continuous business would be taken up which was not urgently necessary, and that, with the exception of the King's law officers, all the attorneys and members of the bar were expected to appear in court in military uniform.[3]

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[1] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 13.

[2] Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, iii. 395.

[3] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 11. 'The order,' McNally wrote, 'that barristers in uniform only should move during the present term at the bar cannot have a good effect. What does it do but furnish a disguise? Will a change of colour produce a

Countless rumours of impending acts of murder or treachery were circulated, and for some days there was a complete ignorance about the extent of the rebellion. Camden wrote on the 25th that all communications with the South were cut off, and that the judges who were going to the assizes at Clonmel were compelled to turn back. Reinforcements, he said, were urgently needed, but there was as yet no news of insurrection in the North.[1]

There is much reason to believe that the outbreak was witnessed with gratification by many of the members and supporters of Government, who believed that the disease which had been during the last years poisoning all the springs of Irish life would be now by a short sharp crisis effectually expelled. I have quoted the imprudent language to this effect used by Beresford in the House of Commons in 1797. Just a month before the rebels appeared in the field, the Knight of Kerry made a remarkable speech in which he declared that the country was incontestably in a state of rebellion; that it was the lurking and mysterious character of the conspiracy that constituted its real danger, and that once the rebels appeared in the field, that danger would soon be over.[2] At the very beginning of the rebellion Lord Clare predicted that the country 'would be more safe and peaceable than for many years back.'[3] 'I con-

change of principles? Besides, there are several who, from personal infirmities, could not assume a military dress without becoming objects of laughter. It would be well perhaps if some of the judges would institute a corps of invalids. McNally might lead blind Moore to battle. But is it just to deprive men of bread because nature or misfortune has crippled their limbs or impaired their constitutions?' (J. W., June 12, 1798.)

[1] Camden to Portland, May 25, 1798.

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, April 25, 1798.

[3] Letter of Bishop Percy (British Museum), May 24, 1798. Percy, who was living much among

sider,' wrote Cooke in a very confidential letter, 'this insurrection, however distressing, as really the salvation of the country. If you look at the accounts that 200,000 men are sworn in a conspiracy, how could that conspiracy be cleared without a burst? *Besides, it will prove many things necessary for the future settlement of the country when peace arises.*'[1]

The Queen's County, as we have seen, had long been in a state of extreme disturbance. It had been proclaimed towards the end of January, and under the influence of martial law great numbers of suspected rebels had been imprisoned, and great quantities of arms discovered and surrendered.[2] On the 25th an open rebellion broke out in it, but only in the feeblest, the most unorganised, and inefficient form. There was much robbery. There were also, it is said, some isolated murders of Protestants, and at four in the morning a party variously estimated at 1,000 or 2,000 attacked the little town of Monasterevan, which was garrisoned by eighty-four yeomen. There was some serious fighting, and the issue for one or two hours seemed very doubtful, but the yeomanry then drove back their assailants, who set fire to some houses and retired under the shelter of the smoke, leaving sixty or seventy of their number dead on the field. Only four or five of the yeomen appear to have fallen. It was noticed that of the gallant little band that defended Monasterevan, fourteen were Catholics, and that ten others were Methodists, who had been deprived of their arms for refusing

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the members of the Irish Government, adds his own opinion: 'In a month's time, all will be perfectly composed, I doubt not, through the whole country; in the metropolis and its environs as well as in the North. But for some days past we have had great commotions and disturbances here.'

[1] Cooke to Wickham (private), May 26, 1798. The italics are mine.

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, Jan. 26, April 5, May 4 and 8, 1798.

to exercise on Sundays, but who now offered their services and bore a distinguished part in the fight.[1]

With this exception, no event of any real importance took place during the rebellion in this county. Some of the rebels who had attacked Monasterevan proceeded towards Portarlington, but they had now dwindled to a disorderly mob of about 200 poor, unguided men, and they were met and easily dispersed by a small body of cavalry at Clonanna, some four miles from Portarlington. Twenty of them were killed at that place, and in or near the wood of Kilbracken.[2] It has been stated that the escape of the remainder was largely due to a yeomanry officer whom they had taken prisoner and whose life they had spared. They at first entreated him to command them, and on his refusal they piteously implored him to advise them. He recommended them to fling away their pikes and to fly across the quaking bog, where the cavalry could not pursue them.[3]

On the same morning on which Monasterevan was attacked, 1,000 or 1,500 rebels attempted to surprise the town of Carlow. They assembled in the middle of the night on the lawn of Sir Edward Crosbie, who lived a mile and a half from the town, and at two in the morning they proceeded to the attack. But either from secret information, or through their total neglect of the most ordinary precautions, their design was known, and the garrison of 450 men, some of them being regular soldiers, were prepared to receive them. The rebels entered Carlow by Tullow Street, unopposed, and pro-

[1] Compare Gordon, p. 80; Maxwell, p. 67; Musgrave; Crookshank's *Hist. of Methodism in Ireland*, pp. 133, 134; and the accounts and despatches in *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 6 and 8, 1798.

[2] Lord Portarlington to Sir J. Parnell, May 25; Major Leatham to Gen. Sir C. Asgill, May 26, 1798 (I.S.P.O.).

[3] Crookshank's *Hist. of Methodism in Ireland*, ii. 134.

ceeded to the open place at the end, where they set up a sudden yell. It was at once answered by a deadly fire from the soldiers, who had been posted at many different points. The panic-stricken rebels endeavoured to fly, but found their retreat cut off; the houses in which they sought a refuge were set on fire, and the soldiers shot or bayoneted all who attempted to escape from the flames. Not less than eighty houses were burnt, and that evening nineteen carts were constantly employed in carrying charred or mangled corpses to a gravel pit near the town. During several days, it is said, roasted remains of rebels fell from the chimneys in which they had concealed themselves. It was believed that more than 600 perished in the fight, or in the flames, or by martial law, without the loss of a single life on the other side.[1]

For the general aspect of the county of Carlow during the rebellion, I can hardly do better than refer my reader to the truthful and graphic journal of Mary Leadbeater, the friend of Burke, and the daughter of his old Quaker schoolmaster, Shackleton. In that most fascinating and pathetic book he will find a lifelike picture of the free quarters, the burning of houses, the floggings, the plunder, the many murders, and many random or wanton outrages that were committed, and he will probably find some difficulty in striking the balance between the crimes of the rebels and the out-

[1] Compare Gordon, Plowden, and Musgrave, and an account by a field officer, who was with the Carlow garrison, printed in Maxwell's *Hist. of the Irish Rebellion*, p. 73. Mrs. Leadbeater says: 'An attack in the night had been made on Carlow, which was repulsed with slaughter, amounting almost to massacre. A row of cabins, in which numbers of the defeated insurgents had taken shelter, were set on fire, and the inmates burned to death. No quarter was given, no mercy shown; and most of those who had escaped, burning with disappointment, rage, and revenge, joined the Wexford party.' (*Leadbeater Papers*, i. 237.)

rages of the soldiers. The condition of the county was that of simple anarchy, in which the restraints of law and legal authority were almost wholly abrogated. There was certainly nothing in the least resembling a desire to massacre the Protestant population, and Mrs. Leadbeater relates many instances of touching kindness and chivalry on the part of the rebels. On the other hand, there were many savage murders, and personal popularity or unpopularity counted for much. 'Women and children,' she says, 'were spared, and Quakers in general escaped; but woe to the oppressor of the poor, the hard landlord, the severe master, or him who was looked upon as an enemy.' The few members of the upper classes who were to be seen were generally dressed in deep black, for there was scarcely a family which had not lost a member.[1]

Among the victims of martial law in this county was Sir Edward Crosbie, who was tried with indecent haste by a court-martial, of which only one member was of a higher rank than a captain, and whose execution appears to have been little better than a judicial murder. He had been a parliamentary reformer of the school of Grattan; he was a benevolent and popular landlord, and he had, a few months before the rebellion, given money for the support of some political prisoners who were in a state of extreme destitution in Carlow gaol, but there was no reason to believe that he was either a United Irishman or a republican. He certainly took no part in the attack on Carlow, and it does not appear that he had any previous knowledge of the intention of the rebels to assemble on his lawn. Some

[1] *Leadbeater Papers.* Some additional information about the condition of the Quakers during the rebellion will be found in a curious book called 'The Principles of Peace Exemplified in the Conduct of the Society of Friends in Ireland during the Rebellion of 1798, by Thomas Hancock, M.D.'

doubtful and suspected evidence, given by one or two convicted United Irishmen, who were trying to save their lives, was, it is true, adduced to the effect that he had uttered words of sympathy with the party, but, on the whole, the probability is that he was a perfectly innocent man, and was completely passive in the matter. The point on which the court-martial seems to have especially insisted was, that he had not at once gone to Carlow to give information. It was urged, probably with perfect truth, that it was impossible for him to have done so, for all his servants had declared themselves United Irishmen; he was surrounded by armed men, and even if he had himself succeeded in escaping, his family would almost certainly have been murdered. The court-martial was hurried through when men were mad with fear and rage. Crosbie had only an hour given him to prepare his defence. He had no proper counsel, and some intended witnesses in his favour afterwards swore that they had tried in vain to obtain admission into the barracks. He was hanged and decapitated, and his head was fixed on a pike outside Carlow gaol. It was afterwards stolen during the night by an old, faithful servant, who brought it to the family burying place.[1]

It appeared at this time very probable that the rebellion was already broken.[2] Mobs of half-starved, half-armed, and wholly undisciplined men, without the

[1] See a pamphlet, published by his family at Bath in 1801, called, *Accurate and Impartial Narration of the Apprehension, Trial, and Execution of Sir Edward Crosbie, Bart.* The minutes of the court-martial, which the family long tried in vain to see, will be found in the Irish State Paper Office. Mrs. Leadbeater gives an extremely unfavourable picture of the conduct on another occasion of Major Denis, who presided at the court-martial. (*Leadbeater Papers*, i. 239.)

[2] This was evidently the opinion of Bishop Percy, who was then in Dublin, and who mixed much in the Government

smallest sign of any skilful or intelligent leadership, or even of any genuine fanaticism, and in many cases almost without common courage, were as yet the only representatives of the conspiracy which had appeared so formidable. On the very day of the attack on Carlow a body of rebels, estimated at more than 3,000, were routed and scattered at Hacketstown, in the same county, with the loss of about 200 men, by a detachment of Antrim Militia and a small force of yeomen, and two soldiers only were slightly injured.[1] On the 26th another rebel body, reckoned at 4,000 men, were totally routed at the hill of Tarah, in Meath, by a force of yeomanry apparently not more than a tenth part of their number. Among the spoils taken in this battle were a general's uniform and a side saddle, and it was noticed that a woman or a man in woman's clothes was prominent among the rebels. 'The killed,' wrote a magistrate the next day, 'were not less than 200. Two prisoners only were taken, who were shot this morning. . . . The roads this day were covered with dead bodies and green cockades, together with pikes and horses they had pressed.'[2] Before the flight was over, it was estimated that at least 350 of the rebels had been killed, while the loss on the loyal side was only nine killed and sixteen wounded. Three hundred horses, and all the ammunition and baggage of the rebels, were captured, and eight soldiers, whom they had taken prisoners and preserved alive, were released. Lord Fingall and his

circles. As early as May 26, he wrote to his wife, that such multitudes of the rebels had been slaughtered, that it was believed that the kingdom would be quieter for many years. Two days later, he wrote that the rebels were everywhere dispersed, 'with great slaughter and very little loss.' 'In a slaughter of 300 or 400, it seldom happens that the King's troops lose more than three or four individuals.' (Bishop Percy's Letters, Brit. Mus.)

[1] Gordon, pp. 81, 82.

[2] Geo. Lambert (Beauparc), May 27, 1798.

Catholic yeomanry bore a distinguished part in this battle. Its consequences were very important, for it completely broke the rebellion in Meath, and it re-opened the communication between the northern part of the kingdom and the metropolis.[1]

In Carlow, the Queen's County, and Meath, indeed, the rebellion was already fairly broken. In Kildare, where it had been much more formidable, it was rapidly dwindling. The village of Rathangan, in that county, appears to have been the scene of some of the most horrible murders in the rebellion. It had been occupied by the rebels on May 26, and they had at once murdered an active magistrate who lived there, and are stated by Musgrave to have afterwards murdered with the utmost deliberation, and often with circumstances of aggravated brutality, not less than eighteen other persons, all of them being Protestants. On the 28th a detachment of Tullamore yeomanry cavalry endeavoured to relieve the town, but they were met with so heavy a fire from the windows that they took flight, with a loss of three killed and eleven wounded. Soon after, however, Colonel Longfield appeared at the head of the City of Cork Militia. This regiment, it may be noticed, like many others employed in suppressing the rebellion, must have been mainly Catholic, and it was accompanied by a detachment of dragoons and by two field-pieces. The rebels had entrenched themselves near the great canal, apparently with some skill, but at the second discharge of artillery they broke into a precipitate flight. No loss was sustained by the troops of Colonel Longfield, but between fifty and sixty rebels were killed in the fight, and several others were afterwards hanged.[2]

[1] Plowden, ii. 702, 703; Gordon, p. 82.

[2] Musgrave, pp. 251–258; Gordon, p. 83. See, too, on the many murders at Rathangan, a letter from Clare. (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 437.)

Nearly at the same time a rebel leader named Perkins, who was encamped with a large force on a hill near the Curragh of Kildare, sent a message to General Dundas, offering to surrender, provided he and his men obtained a free pardon, and were suffered to return to their homes, and provided also certain conspicuous prisoners were released. To the great indignation of the leading supporters of the Government, Dundas transmitted this proposal to Camden, and recommended that it should be accepted. Camden sent back orders to insist upon an unconditional surrender, but in the meantime Dundas had made a short truce with the rebels, and they readily agreed to lay down their arms and disperse, on no other condition than being left at peace. About 2,000 men are said to have availed themselves of this permission, and to have dispersed to their homes with shouts of joy, leaving thirteen cart-loads of pikes behind them.[1]

The conduct of Dundas was furiously blamed in Dublin, and for a time this general was scarcely less unpopular in Government circles than Abercromby had been. In Parliament, also, he appears to have been bitterly and angrily condemned;[2] but if his policy had been steadily pursued, it would have probably brought the rebellion to a speedy and bloodless end. It was interrupted, however, three days later, by a horrible tragedy. Another large body of rebels, who had agreed with General Dundas to surrender their arms, were assembled for that purpose at a place called Gibbet-rath, on the Curragh of Kildare. Sir James Duff, who

[1] See Gordon, pp. 83, 84. The account, however, of Gordon must be compared with the letters (extremely hostile to Dundas) from Beresford and Clare in the *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 432–438.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 433, 440. See, too, Camden to Portland (private), May 31, 1798. Camden adds: 'The feelings of the country are so exasperated, as scarcely to be satisfied with anything short of extirpation.'

had just made a rapid march from Limerick with 600 men, proceeded with his force to receive the weapons. Unfortunately, a gun was fired from the rebel ranks. According to the most probable account, it was fired into the air by a rebel, who foolishly boasted that he would only deliver his gun empty. Instantly, a deadly volley was poured by the troops into the rebels, who fled in wild panic and disorder, fiercely pursued by Lord Jocelyn's Foxhunters. The officers lost all control over their men. In the vast and open plain, defence and escape were alike impossible; and although General Dundas, on hearing what had occurred, hastened to do all that was possible to arrest the slaughter, between 200 and 300 men were killed.

The affair was plausibly, though untruly, represented as a deliberate plot to massacre defenceless men, who had been lured by the promise of pardon into the plain; and it contributed, perhaps, more than any other single cause, to check the disposition to surrender arms. Its bad effects must have been much aggravated by the language used in the House of Commons, where the clemency of Dundas was vehemently denounced, and where a vote of thanks was moved to Sir James Duff. An incident, which occurred at this time, illustrates vividly the extreme recklessness with which human life was now treated in Ireland. A very excellent Kildare Protestant clergyman, named Williamson, fell into the hands of the rebels. The intercession of a Catholic priest saved his life, and he was preserved as a prisoner. He was recaptured by the loyalists, who at once and without trial proceeded to hang him as a rebel. It happened that his brother-in-law was an officer in the regiment, and by this chance alone his life was saved.[1]

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 84–86; Plowden, ii. 706–709; Musgrave, pp. 263, 264.

If a French force of disciplined soldiers had arrived in Ireland at the beginning of the outbreak, or even if without that arrival the rebel plot for seizing Dublin and the Irish Executive had succeeded, the rebellion would very probably for a time at least have triumphed, and Ireland might have passed out of English rule. Neither of these things had happened, and the one remaining chance of the rebels lay in a simultaneous rising, extending over all parts of the island. Such a rising was part of the scheme of the original leaders, and if their plans had not been dislocated by their arrest, it might have taken place. As yet, however, the rebellion had only appeared in a small part of Leinster. Connaught was perfectly peaceful. In Munster, though some pikes were captured, and some slight disorders appeared near Cork and Limerick, there was no semblance of regular rebellion.[1] Above all, Ulster, where the conspiracy had begun, where its organisation was most perfect, and where its outbreak was most dreaded, was absolutely passive, and remained so for a full fortnight after the rebellion began. The plan of

[1] 'Sir James Stuart informs me that the South of Ireland is yet quiet, but the dissatisfaction remains, and no discoveries have been made from a real repentance, but have all been forced by severity.' (Camden to Portland, June 2, 1798.) Some discoveries, which were regarded as very important, were made at this time by a young man, who was said to be a confidential friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and he stated that 4,000 French were expected to land on the Cork coast in the course of this week. Cooke wrote that leaders of the United Irishmen had been arrested at Limerick, Cork, Kinsale, and West Meath, and that 1,500 pikes had been given up near Cork. (Cooke to Wickham, June 2, 1790.) Several persons were flogged, and some, it appears, hanged, about this time at Cork and Limerick. (*Saunders's Newsletter*, June 12, 16, 1798.) Some small bodies of rebels appeared in arms in the south-western part of the county of Cork about June 19, but they were put down with little difficulty in a few days. (Gordon, pp. 163, 164.)

the rebellion had been wholly frustrated. The expected capture of Dublin had failed. The desertion of the Catholic militia, which had been fully counted on, had not taken place, and the forces on the side of the Government had displayed an unexpected energy. The Irish yeomanry have been much and justly blamed by historians for their want of discipline, for their extreme recklessness in destroying both life and property, and for the violent religious passions they too frequently displayed. But if their faults were great, their merits were equally conspicuous. To their patriotic energy, to their ceaseless vigilance, to the courage with which they were always ready to encounter armed bodies, five or even ten times as numerous as themselves, the suppression of the rebellion was mainly due. But the flame had no sooner begun to burn low in the central counties, than it burst out with redoubled fierceness in Wicklow and Wexford, and soon acquired dimensions which taxed all the energies of the Government.

In neither county was it fully expected. Wicklow was one of the most peaceful and most prosperous counties in Ireland. It possessed a large and very respectable resident gentry. The condition of its farmers and labourers was above the average, and it had always been singularly free from disturbance and outrage. Its proximity to Dublin, however, made it peculiarly open to the seductions of the United Irishmen, and it is said that, from an early period of the movement, a party among the Wicklow priests had favoured the conspiracy.[1] The organisation spread so seriously, that some districts were proclaimed in November 1797.[2] There was no branch of the Orange Society in the county of Wicklow, but the yeomanry force in this county is said to have

[1] See Burdy's *History of Ireland*, p. 498.
[2] Musgrave, p. 301.

taken a peculiarly sectarian character, for the strenuous and successful efforts of the United Irishmen to prevent the Catholics from enlisting in it, made it necessary to fill the ranks with Protestants of the lowest order. Having thus succeeded in making the armed force mainly Protestant, the conspirators industriously spread reports that the Orangemen were about to massacre the Catholics, and were supported and instigated by the Government. I have already noticed the maddening terror which such rumours produced, and a Catholic historian states, that in this county not once only, but on several occasions, the whole Catholic population for the extent of thirty miles deserted their homes, and slept in the open air, through the belief that the armed Protestants were about to sweep down upon them to massacre them, or at least to expel them from the county.[1]

By these means a population with very little interest in political questions were scared into rebellion; the conspiracy took root and spread, and the methods of repression that were adopted soon completed the work. The burning of houses, often on the most frivolous grounds, the floggings of suspected individuals, the insults to women, and all the many acts of violence, plunder, brutality, and oppression, that inevitably follow when undisciplined forces, drawn mainly from the lowest classes of society, are suffered to live at free quarters upon a hostile population, lashed the people to madness. I have quoted from the autobiography of Holt the remarkable passage, in which that Wicklow rebel declared how foreign were political and legislative grievances from the motives that turned him into a rebel, and the persecution of those who fell under suspicion was by no means confined to the poor. We have seen a striking example of this in the treatment of Reynolds in the

[1] Plowden, ii. 714–716.

county of Kildare. Grattan himself lived in the county of Wicklow, but fortunately he was detained in England, during the worst period of martial law, by the postponement of the trial of O'Connor; his family, however, found themselves exposed to so many insults, and even dangers, that they took refuge in Wales.[1] A great part of the Ancient Britons were quartered in the county of Wicklow, and these Welsh soldiers appear to have everywhere aroused a deeper hatred than any others who were employed in Ireland.

Some time before the rebellion began, those who knew the people well perceived that a dangerous movement was on foot. A general indisposition to pay debts of any kind, or fulfil any engagements; a marked change in the manner of the people; mysterious meetings by night; vague but persistent rumours, pointing to some great coming change; signal fires appearing frequently upon the hills; busy strangers moving from cottage to cottage, all foreshadowed the storm. There was also a sudden cessation of drinking; a rapid and unnatural abatement of the usual turbulence at fairs or wakes, which, to those who knew Ireland well, was very ominous.[2]

The adjoining county of Wexford was also one of the most prosperous in Ireland. Land sold there at an unusually high price. It had a considerable and intelligent resident gentry, and in general the peasantry were comfortably situated,[3] though there were some

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 377-382.

[2] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 20-24.

[3] Hay's *History of the Rebellion in Wexford* (ed. 1803), pp. 12, 14. This writer is a violent partisan of the rebels. Some of the Wexford magistrates obtained during the rebellion, and in the weeks of martial law that preceded it, a reputation for extreme violence; but it is remarkable that, even in the fiercely partisan accounts of the rebel historians, several of them are spoken of with respect, and even affection. Lord Courtown, Mr. Turner, Mr. Carew, and Mr. Pounden (who was afterwards killed at the head of the yeomanry at Enniscorthy), evidently

districts in which there was extreme poverty. The people were Catholic, but mainly descended from English settlers, and this county boasted that it was the parent of the volunteer movement, the first corps having been raised by Wexford gentlemen, under the command of Sir Vesey Colclough, for the purpose of repressing Whiteboy outrages.[1]

Unlike Wicklow, however, Wexford had been an important centre of Defenderism. A great part of the county had been sworn in to resist the payment of tithes, and in 1793 bodies, numbering, it is said, more than 1,000 men, and very bravely commanded by a young farmer named Moore, had appeared in arms around Enniscorthy. A distinguished officer named Vallotton, who had been first aide-de-camp to General Elliot during the famous siege of Gibraltar, lost his life in suppressing these obscure disturbances, and more than eighty of the Defenders were killed.[2] After this period, however, Wexford appears to have been remarkably free from crime and from illegal organisations,[3] though it took a considerable part in the agitation for Catholic emancipation. It has been asserted by its local historians, that the United Irish movement had made little way in it before the rebellion,[4] and that it was one of the latest and least organised counties in Leinster; but this statement is hardly consistent with the progress which

tried to carry out the disarming with moderation and humanity.

[1] Hay's *History of the Rebellion in Wexford*, (ed. 1803), p. 12.

[2] Taylor's *History of the Wexford Rebellion*, pp. 10–13; Hay, pp. 21–28.

[3] Musgrave, p. 319.

[4] Gordon, p. 86; Hay, p. 55. The statement of these writers was supported by some secret information. On Oct. 17, 1797, Higgins wrote an important letter, stating that the Ulster Committee had just proposed an immediate rising, but that the Leinster Committee refused its consent, stating that, though Dublin was ready, some of the other Leinster counties were not, and that Wexford, by the last returns, only contained 294 United Irishmen.

had been made in arming the population, and Miles Byrne, who took an active part in the Wexford rebellion, assures us that before a shot was fired, the great mass of the people of Wexford had become United Irishmen.[1] How far there was any real political or anti-English feeling smouldering among them, is very difficult to determine. My own opinion, for which I have collected much evidence in this book, is, that there was little positive political disloyalty, though there was much turbulence and anarchy, among the Irish Catholic peasantry, till shortly before the rebellion of 1798, and their attitude at the time of the French expedition to Bantry Bay can hardly be mistaken. Byrne, however, stated in his old age, that he could well remember the sorrow and consternation expressed in the Wexford chapels when the news arrived that the French had failed to land, and he mentions that his own father had told him, that he would sooner see his son dead than wearing the red uniform of the King, and had more than once shown him the country around their farm, bidding him remember that all this had belonged to their ancestors, and that all this had been plundered from them by the English invaders.[2]

In the latter part of 1797, the magistrates became aware that the conspiracy was spreading in the county. It was found that secret meetings were held in many districts, and the usual rumours of plots of the Orange-

[1] *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, i. 55, 56. Hay had based his assertion chiefly on the fact, that reports of the United Irish movement seized at Bond's house, when the leaders of the conspiracy were arrested, made scarcely any mention of Wexford. But Byrne says that the delegate from that county had been delayed, and had not arrived. It appears, however, true that scarcely anything had been done in Wexford to give the people the rudiments of military training, to appoint their commanders, or to form them into regiments.

[2] Ibid. i. 7-10.

men to murder their Catholic neighbours were being industriously circulated by seditious agents, although, 'in fact,' as an historian who lived in the county observes, 'there was no such thing as an Orange association formed in the county of Wexford until a few months after the suppression of the rebellion, nor were there any Orangemen in the county at its breaking out, except a few in the towns, where detachments of the North Cork Regiment of Militia were stationed.'[1] The yeomanry officers discovered that numbers of the Catholics in their corps had been seduced, and they tried to combat the evil by imposing a new test, obliging every man to declare that he was not, and would not be, either an Orangeman or a United Irishman. Many refused to take it, and the Government did not approve of it; but the evil was found to be so serious, that a great part of the yeomanry were disbanded and disarmed.[2] These precautions, as the rebellion shows, were certainly far from needless; but the result was, that the yeomanry became almost exclusively Protestant. It was discovered about the same time, by means of an informer, that several blacksmiths were busily employed in the manufacture of pikes, and one of them, when arrested, confessed that he had been making them for upwards of a year without being suspected. At the end of November there was a meeting of magistrates at Gorey, and by the votes of the majority, 16 out of the 142 parishes in the county were proclaimed.[3] Lord Mountnorris adopted a course which was at that time frequent in Ireland, and went, accompanied by some other magistrates, from chapel to chapel during mass time, exhorting the people to come forward and take the oath of allegiance, promising them 'protections' if they did so, but threatening free quarters if they refused. Great

[1] Taylor, p. 15. [2] Byrne, i. 19–24. [3] Hay, p. 52.

numbers, headed by their priests, took the oath, received protections, and succeeded in disarming suspicion. Many of these were soon after prominent in the rebellion.[1]

It was observed in the beginning of 1798, that the attendance in the chapels suddenly and greatly increased, and religious ceremonies multiplied. Trees were cut down in great numbers, with the evident intention of making pike handles, and the magistrates had little doubt that a vast conspiracy was weaving its meshes around them. At the same time, they almost wholly failed in obtaining trustworthy evidence.[2] Fear or sympathy closed the mouths of witnesses, and several prosecutions which were instituted at the spring assizes failed, as the sole informer proved to be a man of no character or credibility. One man, however, was convicted on clear evidence of having thrown the whole country between Arklow and Bray into a paroxysm of terror, by going among the people telling them that the French had arrived at Bantry, that the yeomen or Orangemen (who were described as if they were identical) were about to march to encounter them, but that, before doing so, they had determined to massacre the entire Catholic population around them. It is easy to conceive the motive and the origin of a report so skilfully devised to drive the whole Catholic population into rebellion, and the historian who has the strongest sympathies with the Wexford rebels, states that 'their first inducement to combine was to render their party strong enough to resist the Orangemen, whom they actually believed to be associated and sworn for the extermination of the Catholics, and "*to wade ankle-deep in their blood.*"' 'It was frequently,' he adds, 'reported

[1] Musgrave, pp. 320–323; Hay, pp. 52, 53; Gordon, pp. 86, 87 Taylor, p. 18.

[2] Byrne, i. 23.

through the country, that the Orangemen were to rise in the night-time, to murder all the Catholics.' At the same time, in the opposite quarter, corresponding fears were rapidly rising, and the respectable Catholics in the neighbourhood of Gorey offered a reward of one hundred guineas for the detection of those who had spread a rumour that on Sunday, April 29, all the churches were to be attacked, and that a general massacre of Protestants was to follow.[1]

It was evident that the county was in a very dangerous state, and it was equally evident that if the conspiracy exploded, it would take the form of a religious war. On April 27, the whole county was proclaimed and put under martial law, and it was martial law carried out not by the passionless and resistless force of a well-disciplined army, but mainly by small parties of yeomen and militia, who had been hastily armed for the defence of their homes and families, who were so few that if a rebellion broke out before the population had been disarmed, they would almost certainly have been massacred, and who were entirely unaccustomed to military discipline. As might have been expected, such circumstances at once led to outrages which, although they may have been exaggerated and multiplied by partisan historians, were undoubtedly numerous and horrible. Great numbers of suspected persons were flogged, or otherwise tortured. Some were strung up in their homes to be hanged, and then let down half strangled to elicit confession, and this process is said to have been repeated on the same victim as much as three times.[2] Numbers of cabins were burnt to the ground because pikes or other weapons had been found in them, or because the inhabitants, contrary to the

[1] Hay's *Hist. of the Rebellion in Wexford*, pp. 53–56.
[2] Ibid. p. 64.

proclamation, were absent from them during the night, or even because they belonged to suspected persons. The torture of the pitched cap, which never before appears to have been known in Ireland, was now introduced by the North Cork Militia, and excited fierce terror and resentment.

It was in the week previous to the outbreak of the rebellion that these excesses reached their height. A gentleman named Dawson discovered that, although his tenants had very recently come forward in their chapel, and in the presence of their priest, to take the oath of allegiance, they were, notwithstanding, actively engaged in the fabrication of pikes. He succeeded in obtaining some confessions, and immediately great numbers surrendered pikes, and asked and obtained protections.[1] A meeting of the magistrates was held, and they agreed that readiness to take the oath of allegiance, unaccompanied by a surrender of arms, must no longer be accepted as a proof of loyalty; that the danger of the county was extreme and imminent, and that the most strenuous measures were required. Free quarters had not yet been enforced in Wexford; but the magistrates now announced, that they would begin in fourteen days in every district in which arms had not been surrendered.[2] In the meantime, burnings, whippings, transportations, and torture were unsparingly employed to force a surrender. One active magistrate is said to have scoured the country at the head of a party of cavalry yeomen, accompanied by a regular executioner, with a hanging rope and a cat-o'-nine-tails, flogging and half strangling suspected persons till confessions were elicited and arms surrendered. A Catholic historian graphically describes the inhabitants of a

[1] Musgrave, pp. 321–325.
[2] This was on May 23. (Hay, pp. 73–78.)

village when the yeomanry descended on them. 'They had the appearance of being more dead than alive, from the apprehension of having their houses burnt and themselves whipped. . . . They fled out of their houses into large brakes of furze on a hill immediately above the village, whence they could hear the cries of one of their neighbours, who was dragged out of his house, tied up to a thorn tree, and while one yeoman continued flogging him, another was throwing water on his back. The groans of the unfortunate sufferer, from the stillness of the night, reverberated widely through the appalled neighbourhood, and the spot of execution, these men represented to have appeared next morning "as if a pig had been killed there."'[1]

'Protections' could no longer be obtained by the simple process of taking the oath of allegiance without a surrender of arms, and it is pretended by the rebel historians that many innocent persons were so terrified and so persecuted if they did not possess them, that they made desperate efforts to obtain arms for the sole purpose of surrendering them. It is certain, however, that the country was at this time full of arms, accumulated for the purpose of rebellion, and it is equally certain that the violent measures that were taken produced the surrender of many of them. In the single parish of Camolin many hundreds were given up in a few days, and it is stated that several thousands of protections were issued in the week before the rebellion.

As the yeomen were chiefly Protestants, it is perhaps not surprising that they should have been regarded as Orangemen, but it is much more strange that this charge should have especially centred on the North Cork Militia. This regiment is accused by historians

[1] Hay, pp. 78, 79.

of both parties of having first publicly introduced the Orange system into the county of Wexford, where it appears previously to have been unknown,[1] and it seems to have excited a stronger popular resentment than any other Irish regiment during the rebellion. It was commanded by Lord Kingsborough, and it is worthy of especial notice, that it only came to the county of Wexford in the course of April.[2] It is probably true that some of its officers wore Orange badges, and it is perhaps true that they had connected themselves with the Orange Society, but it is quite certain that no regiment raised in the South of Ireland, and in an essentially Catholic county, could possibly have consisted largely of Orangemen. It happened that Newenham, the excellent historian of the social condition of Ireland, had been major in it about two years before the rebellion broke out, and he mentions that at that time two-thirds of the regiment were Catholics.[3] Whatever may have been its demerits, no regiment showed a more unflinching loyalty during the rebellion, and it is said to have lost a full third of its numbers.

The terror and resentment in Wexford were much increased by a horrible tragedy which took place, on the morning of May 24, at the little town of Dunlavin, in the adjoining county of Wicklow. 'Thirty-four men,' says the historian, who is in sympathy with the rebellion, 'were shot without trial, and among them the informer on whose evidence they were arrested. Strange

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[1] Compare Taylor, p. 15; Hay, p. 57.

[2] Hay says (p. 57), 'in the beginning' of April; but Musgrave, whose information is very precise, says it only arrived in the county on April 26, and consisted of only 300 men (p. 325). Long before this date, the county was permeated with sedition.

[3] Newenham's *State of Ireland*, p. 273. Newenham, in fact, quotes this regiment as an example of the loyalty shown by large bodies of Catholics during the rebellion.

to tell, officers presided to sanction these proceedings.'[1] The other version of the transaction is given by Musgrave. He says that large columns of rebels were advancing on Dunlavin, and the small garrison of yeomen and militia found that they were far too few to hold it. The number of prisoners in the gaol for treason greatly exceeded that of the yeomen. Under these circumstances, 'the officers, having conferred for some time, were of opinion that some of the yeomen who had been disarmed, and were at that time in prison for being notorious traitors, should be shot. Nineteen, therefore, of the Saunders Grove corps, and nine of the Narromore, were immediately led out and suffered death. It may be said in excuse for this act of severe and summary justice, that they would have joined the numerous bodies of rebels who were roving round, and at that time threatened the town. At the same time, they discharged the greater part of their prisoners, in consideration of their former good characters.'[2]

Another slaughter of the same kind is said to have taken place on the following day, at the little town of Carnew, in the same county, but there is, I believe, no evidence in existence which can explain its circumstances. As Carnew was at this time in the centre of the rebellious district,[3] it is probable that this also was a case of a small body of yeomen, menaced by a superior rebel force, and reduced to the alternative of shooting or releasing their prisoners. Hay, who is the authority for the story, declares that at Carnew 'on May 25, twenty-eight prisoners were brought out of the place of confinement, and deliberately shot in a ball alley by the yeomen and a party of the Antrim Militia, the infernal deed being sanctioned by the presence of their officers. Many of the men thus inhumanly butchered had been

[1] Hay, p. 87. [2] Musgrave, p. 243. [3] Hay, pp. 86, 87.

confined on mere suspicion.'[1] In the history of Musgrave there is no mention whatever of this terrible story, nor is it, I believe, anywhere referred to either in contemporary newspapers or in the Government correspondence; but I cannot dismiss it as a fabrication, in the face of the language of Gordon, who is the most truthful and temperate of the loyalist historians. 'No quarter,' he says, 'was given to persons taken prisoners as rebels, with or without arms. For one instance, fifty-four were shot in the little town of Carnew in the space of three days.'[2]

The history of the Wexford rebellion has been treated by several writers, who had ample opportunities of ascertaining the facts, but they have in general written under the influence of the most furious party and religious passion, and sometimes of deep personal injuries, and they have employed themselves mainly in collecting, aggravating, and elaborating the crimes of one side, and in either concealing or reducing to the smallest proportions those of the other. Few narratives of the same period are so utterly different, and the reader who will compare the Protestant accounts in Musgrave, Taylor, and Jackson, with the Catholic accounts in Hay, Byrne, Cloney, and Teeling, will, I think, understand how difficult is the task of any writer whose only object is to tell the story with simple and unexaggerated truth. Fortunately, however, one contemporary historian belongs to a different category. Gordon was a Protestant clergyman, who had resided for about twenty-three years near Gorey, which was one of the chief centres of the insurrection; he was intimately acquainted with the circumstances of the country, and his son was lieutenant in a yeomanry regiment,

[1] Hay, pp. 76, 87. See also Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 35, 36. Byrne says he knew several of the murdered men. [2] Gordon, p. 222.

which took an active part in suppressing the rebellion. He was a writer of little ability and no great research, but he had admirable opportunities of knowing the truth, and no one who reads his history can doubt that he was a most excellent, truthful, moderate, and humane man, singularly free from religious and political bigotry, loyal beyond all suspicion, but yet with an occasional, and very pardonable, bias towards the weaker side.

His estimate of the causes of the rebellion is probably as near the truth as it is possible for us to arrive at. He does not conceal the fact, that a dangerous political conspiracy had been planted in the country, but he attributes the magnitude and the fierceness of the Wexford rebellion to causes that were in no degree political—to religious animosities; to the terror excited in both sects by the rumours of impending massacres; to the neglect of the Government, which left the country, in a time of great danger, without any sufficient protection; to the violent irritation produced by the military measures that have been described. These measures were not, he admits, altogether inefficacious for good. 'In the neighbourhood of Gorey,' he says, 'if I am not mistaken, the terror of the whippings was in particular so great, that the people would have been extremely glad to renounce for ever all notions of opposition to Government, if they could have been assured of permission to remain in a state of quietness.' But a maddening panic was abroad, and by a strange error of judgment, while the most violent animosities were excited, the military force in the county was utterly inadequate. 'Not above six hundred men, at most, of the regular army or militia were stationed in the county, the defence of which was almost abandoned to the troops of yeomanry and their supplementaries, while the magistrates in the several districts were em-

ployed in ordering the seizure, imprisonment, and whipping of numbers of suspected persons.' He adds, that another great error had been made in making the yeomanry force, cavalry instead of infantry. He had no doubt 'that of the latter, a force might have been raised within the county of Wexford, quite sufficient to crush the rebellion in its commencement in this part of Ireland.'[1]

It was on the evening of Saturday, May 26, that the standard of insurrection was raised at a place called Boulavogue, between Wexford and Gorey, by Father John Murphy, the curate of the parish, a priest who had been educated at Seville, and whose character is very variously, though not quite incompatibly, represented by the opposing parties. He is described by one set of writers as an ignorant, narrow-minded, sanguinary fanatic, and by another set of writers as an honest and simple-minded man, who had been driven to desperation by the burning of his house and chapel, and of the houses of some of his parishioners.[2] A small party of eighteen or twenty yeomanry cavalry, on hearing of the assembly, hastened to disperse it, but they

[1] Gordon's *Hist. of the Irish Rebellion*, pp. 86–88. Musgrave says that, when the rebellion broke out, 'there were no other troops in the county of Wexford but the North Cork Militia, consisting of but 300 men, and they did not arrive there till April 26. Their headquarters were at Wexford, where three companies of them were stationed; the remainder were quartered at Gorey, Enniscorthy, and Ferns. Two thousand troops properly cantoned in it would have awed the rebels into obedience, and have prevented the possibility of a rising.' (P. 326.) Musgrave probably underrates the number of the North Cork Militia. Newenham (*State of Ireland*, p. 273) says they were 600, which seems to agree with Gordon's estimate.

[2] Compare the accounts in Hay, Cloney, and Miles Byrne, with those in Musgrave. Musgrave admits that Father John's house was burnt, but states (supporting himself by depositions), that it was not until after that priest had taken arms, and he asserts that the yeomanry captain prevented his men from burning the chapel.

were unexpectedly attacked, and scattered, and Lieutenant Bookey, who commanded them, was killed. Next day the circle of devastation rapidly spread. Two very inoffensive clergymen, and five or, according to another account, seven other persons, were murdered, and the houses of the Protestant farmers in the neighbourhood were soon in a blaze. A considerable number of Catholic yeomen deserted to the rebels, who now concentrated themselves on two hills called Oulart and Killthomas, the former ten miles to the north of Wexford, the latter nine miles to the west of Gorey. Two hundred and fifty yeomen attacked and easily dispersed the rebels on Killthomas Hill, though they were about ten times as numerous as their assailants. The retribution was terrible. About one hundred and fifty rebels were killed; the yeomen pursued the remainder for some seven miles, burning on their way two Catholic chapels and, it is said, not less than one hundred cabins and farmhouses, and they are accused of having shot many unarmed and inoffensive persons. Two or three Catholic priests were among the rebels of Killthomas.[1]

A more formidable body of rebels, estimated at about 4,000, under the command of Father John, had assembled on the hill of Oulart. With the complete contempt for disorderly and half-armed rebel mobs which characterised the Irish loyalists, a picked body of only 110 of the North Cork Militia, under the command of Colonel Foote, proceeded at once to attack them, while a few

[1] Gordon, pp. 90–92; Taylor, pp. 26–30; Hay, pp. 87–89. See, too, the very curious journal of Father J. Murphy, printed by Musgrave, Appendix, p. 83. Hay positively says: 'The yeomanry in the north of the county proceeded on the 27th against a quiet and defenceless populace; sallied forth in their neighbourhoods, burned numbers of houses, and put to death hundreds of persons who were unarmed, unoffending, and unresisting; so that those who had taken up arms had the greater chance of escape at that time.' (P. 89.)

cavalry were collected below to cut off their retreat. The confidence of the loyalist militia seemed at first justified, for the rebels fled at the first onset, hotly pursued up the hill by the militia, when Father John succeeded in rallying his pikemen. He told them that they were surrounded, and must either conquer or perish, and placing himself at their head, he charged the troops. These were scattered in the pursuit, and breathless from the ascent, and they had never before experienced the formidable character of the Irish pike. In a few moments almost the whole body were stretched lifeless on the ground; five only of the force that mounted the hill succeeded in reaching the cavalry below and escaping to Wexford.

This encounter took place on the morning of Whitsunday, May 27. Its effects were very great. The whole country was at once in arms, while the loyalists fled from every village and farmhouse in the neighbourhood. Father John lost no time in following up his success. He encamped that night on Carrigrew Hill, and early on the following day he occupied the little town of Camolin, about six miles from Oulart, where he found 700 or 800 guns. Some of them belonged to the yeomen, but most of them had been collected from the surrounding country when it was disarmed. He then proceeded two miles farther, to Ferns, whence all the loyalists had fled, and after a short pause, and on the same day, resolved to attack Enniscorthy, one of the most important towns in the county, and a chief military centre.

The great majority of his followers consisted of a rabble of half-starved peasantry, drawn from a country which was sunk in abject squalor and misery[1]—men

[1] I have quoted Whitley Stokes's description of the condition of the peasantry at Oulart, vol. iii. p. 414.

who were assuredly perfectly indifferent to the political objects of the United Irishmen, but who were driven into rebellion by fear of Orange massacres, or by exasperation at military severities.[1] Most of them had no better arms than pitchforks, and great numbers of women were among them. They had no tents, no commissariat, no cavalry, hardly a vestige of discipline or organisation; and although the capture of Camolin had given them many guns, they were in general quite incapable of using them. There were, however, some exceptions to the general inefficiency. There were among them men from the barony of Shilmalier, who had been trained from boyhood to shoot the sea birds and other wild fowl for the Dublin market, and who were in consequence excellent marksmen; there were deserters from the yeomanry, who were acquainted with the use of arms and with the rules of discipline; and after the success at Oulart Hill, a few sons of substantial farmers gradually came in with their guns and horses, while even the most unpractised found the pike a weapon of terrible effect. No other weapon, indeed, employed by the rebels, was so dreaded by the soldiers, especially by the cavalry; no other weapon inflicted

[1] Cloney gives a vivid picture of the state of feeling at this time. 'While the events which I have related were occurring on the 25th, 26th, and 27th, the people in my quarter of the country . . . were in the most terror-struck and feverish anxiety, as reports were for some time industriously circulated that the Orangemen would turn out, and commit a general and indiscriminate massacre on the Roman Catholics. . . . The most peaceable and well-disposed fancied they saw themselves, their families, and their neighbours, involved in one common ruin, and that each approaching night might possibly be the last of their domestic happiness. No one slept in his own house. The very whistling of the birds seemed to report the approach of an enemy. The remembrance of the wailings of the women and the cries of the children awake in my mind, even at this period, feelings of deep horror.' (*Personal Narrative of the Transactions in the County of Wexford*, p. 14.)

such terrible wounds, or proved at close quarters so formidable.[1]

Enniscorthy was attacked shortly after midday on the 28th, and captured after more than three hours of very severe fighting. The garrison appears to have consisted of about 300 infantry and cavalry yeomen, and militia, and they were supported by some hastily raised volunteers. The rebel force had now swollen to 6,000 or 7,000 men. The little garrison sallied forth to attack the assailants, and a severe and obstinate fight ensued. Adopting a rude but not ineffectual strategy, which they more than once repeated in the course of the rebellion, and which is said to have been practised in Ireland as far back as the days of Strongbow, the rebels broke the ranks of the soldiers by driving into them a number of horses and cattle, which were goaded on by the pikemen. The yeomen at last, finding themselves in danger of being surrounded, were driven backwards into the town, and made a stand in the market-place and on the bridge across the Slaney. For some time a disorderly fight continued, with so fluctuating a fortune, that orange and green ribbons are said to have been alternately displayed by many in the town. Soon, however, a number of houses were set on fire, and a scene of wild confusion began. The ammunition of the yeomanry ran short. The rebels forded the river; and a general flight took place. The loyalists in wild confusion fled through the burning streets, and made their way to Wexford, which was eleven Irish miles distant. The rebels, fatigued with their labours of the day, attempted no pursuit, and after searching the town for ammunition, they retired, and formed their camp around the summit of Vinegar Hill, a small rocky eminence

[1] See Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 123, 152, 163, 266; Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 43, 156.

which rises immediately behind the town. Three officers and rather more than eighty soldiers had fallen, and between four and five hundred houses and cabins had been burnt. The loss of the insurgents is vaguely estimated at from one hundred to five hundred men.[1]

When the news of the capture of Enniscorthy arrived at Wexford, the wildest terror prevailed. The wives of soldiers who had been killed ran screaming through the streets, while streams of fugitives poured in, covered with dust and blood, half fainting with terror and fatigue, and thrown destitute upon the world. The few ships that lay in the harbour were soon thronged with women and children, and most of the adult men who possessed or could procure weapons, prepared to defend the town from the anticipated attack. Fears of massacre, however, from without, and of treachery from within, hung heavy on every mind, and an attempt was made to avert the calamity by negotiation. Three prominent and popular country gentlemen, named Bagenal Harvey, John Henry Colclough, and Edward Fitzgerald, who were supposed to have some sympathy with the rebellion, had been arrested on suspicion, and thrown into Wexford gaol, and it was now proposed to release them, and request them to go to the insurgents on Vinegar Hill, for the purpose of inducing them to disperse. Colclough and Fitzgerald, who were both Catholics, accepted the mission. They were received with great applause by the rebels, but their efforts proved wholly vain. Colclough returned to Wexford. Fitzgerald, either voluntarily or through compulsion, re-

[1] There is, as usual, a great diversity in the accounts of the proceedings in Enniscorthy. Musgrave accuses the rebels of killing all the wounded, and committing many other atrocities, while Byrne expressly says that no houses were burned or pillaged after the town was taken, and that the insurgents abstained from imitating the cruelties of the yeomanry and soldiers.

mained with the rebels, who at once made him one of their chiefs.

A party of two hundred Donegal Militia with a six-pounder arrived at Wexford from Duncannon Fort, which was twenty-three miles from Wexford, early on the morning of the 29th, and they brought with them the promise from General Fawcett of further assistance. Including the volunteers, the town now contained about twelve hundred well-armed defenders. To avoid the danger of a conflagration like that of Enniscorthy, orders were given that all fires should be extinguished except during specified hours, and all thatched houses in or near the town were stripped, while barriers were raised at the chief passes.

The rebels meanwhile wasted some precious hours in indecision and divided counsels. They scoured the country for arms and provisions, compelled prominent men to come into their camp, and murdered some who were peculiarly obnoxious to them. Two men named Hay and Barker, who had seen considerable service in the French army, now joined them. Hay was the brother of the historian of the rebellion, and a member of a family which had taken a prominent part in the Catholic affairs of the county. Barker had served with distinction in the Irish Brigade. There was, however, no acknowledged commander, no fixed plan, no discipline. It was noticed that particular grievances, and the interests of particular districts, completely dominated, with the great mass of the rebels, over all general considerations, and this fact clearly indicated the kind of influences that had brought the greater part of them together. One man pointed to his forehead, scorched and branded by the pitched cap; another showed with burning anger his lacerated back; others told how their cottages had been burnt, how their little properties had been plundered or destroyed, how their wives and

daughters had been insulted by the yeomen, and implored that a force might be sent either to protect their families from massacre by the Orangemen, or to avenge the grievances they had suffered. It needed all the influence of Father John, and of a few men of superior social standing, to prevent the rebel army from disintegrating into small groups, and it is doubtful whether they would have succeeded if the mission of Fitzgerald and Colclough had not persuaded the people that the enemy were completely discouraged.[1] And even when the tendency to dispersion was checked, the question which town should next be attacked profoundly divided the rebel chiefs. They were divided between New Ross, Newtown-barry, and Wexford. The best military opinion seems to have favoured the first. New Ross might, it is believed, at this time have been captured without opposition, and, by opening a communication with the disaffected in the counties of Waterford and Kilkenny, its possession would have given a great immediate extension to the rebellion. Both Barker and Hay advocated this course,[2] but they were overruled, and it was resolved to attack Wexford. That night the rebels advanced to a place called Three Rocks, the Wexford end of a long heather-clad mountain ridge called the Forth, which stretches across the plain to within about three miles of Wexford, commanding a vast view of the surrounding country. Father John led the way, bearing a crucifix in his hands. After him, the men of most influence seem to have been Edward Fitzgerald, Edward Roach, and John Hay. It is a curious and significant fact, that all these owed their ascendency mainly to their position among the landed gentry of the county.

[1] See the graphic descriptions of the camp at Vinegar Hill, in Cloney's *Personal Narrative*, and in Miles Byrne's *Memoirs*.

[2] Gordon, p. 117; Byrne, i. 66.

General Fawcett had left Duncannon Fort with the promised succour on the evening of the 29th, but stopped short that night at Taghmon, about seven miles from Wexford. On the morning of the 30th, he sent forward a detachment of eighty-eight men with two howitzers. They seem to have advanced very incautiously, and as they passed under the Three Rocks, the rebel pikemen poured down fiercely upon them. The affray did not last more than fifteen minutes, and it was terribly decisive. The two cannon were taken. An ensign and sixteen privates were made prisoners. Every other soldier soon lay dead upon the ground. A cluster of thorn trees in an adjacent field still marks the spot where their bodies were collected and buried. General Fawcett, on hearing of the disaster, at once retreated with the remainder of his troops to Duncannon, leaving Wexford to its fate.

The Wexford garrison, who were ignorant of what had occurred, sallied out on the same day to the Three Rocks, hoping to disperse the rebels. They found, however, a force estimated at not less than 16,000 men, and they were received with a steady fire. They at once returned to Wexford, leaving Colonel Watson dead upon the field.

The alarm in Wexford was now extreme. Early on the morning of the 30th, the toll house and part of the bridge were found to be in flames, and there were great fears of an extensive conflagration. The town was not made for defence. Two-thirds of its inhabitants were Catholics, and could not be counted on; several yeomen deserted to the rebels, and among the remainder there was scarcely any discipline or subordination. Some desired to kill the prisoners in the gaol, and Bagenal Harvey was so much alarmed, that he climbed up a chimney, where he remained for some time concealed. If the insurgents had at once advanced and blocked the

roads of retreat, especially that to Duncannon Fort, the whole garrison must have surrendered. Hay, who surveyed the situation with the eye of a practised soldier, implored them to do so,[1] but his advice was neglected, and it is, perhaps, scarcely to be wondered at, that a disorderly and inexperienced force like that of the rebels, having on this very day crushed one detachment and repulsed another, should have relaxed its efforts, and failed to act with the promptitude of a regular army under a skilful general. At Wexford a council of war was now hastily summoned, and it was decided that the town must be surrendered. Bagenal Harvey was prevailed on to write a letter to the rebels, stating that he and the other prisoners had been treated with all possible humanity, and were now at liberty, and imploring the insurgents to commit no massacre, to abstain from burning houses, and to spare their prisoners' lives. Two brothers of the name of Richards, who were known to be popular in the county, were sent to the rebels to negotiate a surrender. They tied white handkerchiefs round their hats as a sign of truce, brought some country people with them, and reached the rebel camp in safety. After some discussion and division, the rebels agreed to spare lives and property, but insisted that all cannon, arms, and ammunition should be surrendered. They detained one of the brothers as a hostage, and sent back the other with Edward Fitzgerald to Wexford to arrange the capitulation.

But long before they had arrived there, almost the whole garrison had fled from the town by the still open road to Duncannon Fort, leaving the inhabitants absolutely unprotected, but carrying with them their arms and ammunition. The yeomen, commanded by Colonel Colville, are said to have kept some order in the flight,

[1] Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 76, 77; Cloney's *Personal Narrative*, p. 24.

but the other troops scattered themselves over the country, shooting peasants whom they met, burning cottages, and also, it is said, several Roman Catholic chapels.[1] In the town the quays, and every avenue leading to the water-side, were thronged with women and children, begging in piteous tones to be taken in the ships. One young lady, in her terror, actually threw herself into the sea, in order to reach a boat. The shipowners, who were chiefly Wexford men, or men from the neighbouring country, had promised to convey the fugitives to Wales, and received exorbitant fares; but when the town was occupied by the rebels, most of them betrayed their trust, and brought them back to the town.

It was, indeed, a terrible fate to be at the mercy of the vast, disorderly, fanatical rabble who now poured into Wexford. It was not surprising, too, that the rebels should have contended that faith had been broken with them; that Fitzgerald and Colclough had been sent on a sham embassy, merely in order to secure a period of delay, during which the garrison might escape with their arms. The inhabitants, however, either through sympathy or through a very pardonable policy, did all they could to conciliate their conquerors. Green handkerchiefs, flags, or branches of trees, were hung from every window, and most of the townsmen speedily assumed the green cockade, flung open their houses, and offered refreshment to the rebels. It was observed that many refused it till the person who offered it had partaken of it himself, for there was a widespread rumour that the drink had been poisoned. The rebels, who had been sleeping for many nights without cover on the heather, presented a wild, savage, grotesque appearance. They were, most of them, in

[1] Gordon, p. 102; Burdy, p. 510; Cloney, p. 24; Hay, pp. 119, 120.

the tattered dress of the Irish labourer, distinguished only by white bands around their hats and by green cockades, but many were fantastically decorated with ladies' hats, bonnets, feathers, and tippets, taken from plundered country houses, while others wore portions of the uniform of the soldiers who had been slain. Their arms consisted chiefly of pikes, with handles from twelve to fourteen feet long, and sometimes, it is said, even longer. A few men carried guns. Many others had pitchforks, scrapers, currying knives, or old rusty bayonets fixed on poles. A crowd of women accompanied them on their march, shouting and dancing in the wildest triumph.[1]

On the whole, they committed far less outrage than might reasonably have been expected. Two or three persons, against whom they had special grudges, were murdered, and one of these lay dying all night on the bridge. Many houses were plundered, chiefly those which had been deserted by their owners, but no houses were burned, and there was at this time no general disposition to massacre, though much to plunder. In Wexford also, as at Enniscorthy, and elsewhere, the rebels abstained most remarkably from those outrages on women which in most countries are the usual accompaniment of popular and military anarchy. This form of crime has, indeed, never been an Irish vice, and the presence of many women in the camp contributed to prevent it. The rebels also were very tired, and, in spite of some intoxication, the streets of Wexford on the night of May 30 were hardly more disturbed than in time of peace.

A general search was made for arms and ammu-

[1] See the description in the *Narrative of Charles Jackson*, pp. 14, 15. Jackson, Cloney, and Hay were all present in Wexford when it was occupied by the rebels.

nition, but only a few barrels of gunpowder and a few hundred cartridges were found. Much exasperation was at first felt against those who had conducted the negotiation, which had enabled the garrison to escape, and the life of Fitzgerald seemed for a short time in danger, but he soon recovered his ascendency.[1] The gaol was thrown open, and Bagenal Harvey was not only released, but was also at once, by acclamation, appointed commander-in-chief. Few facts in the history of the rebellion are more curious or more significant than this. In Wexford, more than in any other part of Ireland, the rebellion became essentially Popish, and the part played by religious fanaticism was incontestably great. Yet even here a Protestant landlord, of no brilliant parts or character, was selected by the triumphant rebels as their leader. Bagenal Harvey was the owner of a considerable property in the county, but, unlike most Irish landlords of independent means, he devoted himself to a profession, and had some practice at the bar. He was a humane, kindly, popular man, much liked by his tenants and neighbours, and long noted for his advanced political opinions. He had been a prominent United Irishman in 1793. He had been one of those who were commissioned to present a petition to the King against the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam in 1795, and he had been on all occasions an active advocate of the Catholic cause. He had fought several duels, and established a reputation for great personal courage, but he was absolutely without military knowledge or experience. His health was weak. His presence was exceedingly unimposing, and he had none of the magnetic or controlling qualities that are needed for the leader of a rebellion. Whether sympathy, or ambition, or the danger of resisting the

[1] Hay, p. 121.

summons of the fierce armed mob that surrounded him, induced him to accept the post, it is impossible to say. In the few weeks during which he exercised a feeble and precarious power, his main object was to prevent outrage and murder, and to give the struggle the character of regular war.

On the 31st the main body of the rebels quitted Wexford, leaving in it, however, a sufficient force to hold the town. The command of it was entrusted to another Protestant, Captain Matthew Keugh, a retired half-pay officer in the English army, who had served in the American war, and who was well known for his popular opinions. He divided the town into wards, and organised in each a company of men, armed with guns or pikes, who elected their own officers. A regular parade was established; guards were appointed and relieved, and a password was daily given. At first, self-appointed commissaries, under pretence of making requisitions, plundered houses indiscriminately, but a committee of twelve principal inhabitants was elected to regulate the requisition and distribution of food, and mere plunder appears then to have almost ceased. The new authorities resolved to punish it severely; they restored some plundered property, and they established public stores of provisions, from which every householder might obtain supplies gratuitously in proportion to the number of his household. Great quantities of provisions seem to have been brought in from the surrounding country, and there was no serious want. It was noticed that no money except coin was recognised, and that bank notes were often used to light pipes, or as wadding for the guns. All the able-bodied men were called upon to attend the camps, and there was a curious, childish desire for decoration. 'Most persons,' says a writer who was present, 'were desirous to wear ornaments of some kind or other, and accordingly

decorated themselves in the most fantastical manner, with feathers, tippets, handkerchiefs, and all the showy parts of ladies' apparel.' Green was naturally the favourite colour, but banners of all colours except the hated orange now appeared, and the coloured petticoats of the women were largely employed in military decorations.[1]

On the whole, the better class of citizens succeeded in maintaining a precarious ascendency, but a few men from the humbler classes became captains. Of these, the most powerful was a former shoeblack, named Dick Munk, who had acquired much influence over the townsmen, and was now conspicuous from his green uniform with silver lace, his green helmet, and his white ostrich plume.[2] The leaders, however, were in a great degree in the hands of the mob, and the distinction between Catholic and Protestant was at once strongly accentuated. The houses around Wexford were everywhere searched to discover 'Orangemen.' All who harboured 'Orangemen' were threatened with death. Every Protestant who was not well known, and whose sympathies were not popular, lay under the suspicion of Orangism, and some hundreds were thrown into Wexford gaol or confined in the barracks. It was probably the best fate that could happen to them, for their lives would have been in great danger if they had been at large, and more than once crowds appeared at the prison door clamouring for their blood. Keugh, however, set himself steadily to prevent massacre, and he was nobly seconded by a man named William Kearney, to whom the care of the prisoners had been entrusted, and who showed himself a true gentleman, and a man of conspicuous humanity and courage.[3] Certificates were given

[1] Hay, pp. 128–133.

[2] Jackson's *Personal Narrative*, p. 35.

[3] Compare the grudging admission in Taylor's *History of the Rebellion in the County of*

to Protestants by Catholic neighbours, but especially by the Catholic bishops and clergy. Dr. Caulfield, the Catholic Bishop of Wexford, afterwards wrote a curious private letter to Archbishop Troy, describing the state of things during the rebel rule at Wexford, and he declares that there was not a Protestant in the town or in the surrounding country who did not come to the priests for protection, and that priests were employed from morning to night in endeavouring to secure them.[1] The leading inhabitants were extremely anxious that there should be no religious persecution, and they even desired that the Protestant worship should continue,[2] but there could be no doubt of the current of popular feeling. 'If you will go home and turn Christians,' the rebels were accustomed to say, 'you will be safe enough.' Old faithful Catholic servants in Protestant households came to their mistresses, imploring them to allow the parish priest to christen the family, as 'it would be the saving of them all.'[3] The chapels, both in Wexford and the neighbourhood, and around Vinegar Hill, were crowded with Protestants, who sought to secure their lives, property, and liberty, by obtaining from the priests certificates of conformity.

Two Roman Catholics of the name of Murphy, who had given information at trials against United Irishmen, were seized, tried for this offence, and put to death. The executions were conducted with elaborate

Wexford, p. 81, with the warm and striking testimony of Mrs. Adams, in her most interesting account of her experiences, appended to Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland*, pp. 347–385. This narrative was written, without any view to publication, by the daughter of a Protestant country gentleman, who lived close to Wexford, and it is one of the most instructive pictures of the state of the county of Wexford during the rebellion.

[1] Plowden, ii. 750.

[2] Hay, p. 144. It did not, however, continue, and the Protestants who were not in confinement generally thought it advisable to attend the Catholic service.

[3] Croker, p. 364.

ceremony, which was evidently intended to invest them with a judicial character, and to distinguish them from acts of mob violence. A procession was formed; the Dead March was played; a black flag was hoisted, and when the place of execution was reached, all the people dropped on their knees in prayer. Either as a mark of ignominy, or more probably in order to baffle justice if the rebellion was defeated, Protestant prisoners were compelled to shoot the culprits.[1]

Roving bands of plunderers ranged unchecked through the surrounding country; the few loyalists and Protestants there lived in constant alarm, and in the complete anarchy that prevailed, there was a boundless scope for the gratification of private malice and private greed. It must, however, be added that, among the many horrors which throw a lurid light on this portion of Irish history, there were many incidents that show human nature at its best. Examples of gratitude or affection shown by tenants to their landlords, by old servants to their masters, by poor men who had received in past time some little acts of charity and kindness from the rich, were very frequent. Protestant ladies sometimes passed unmolested on missions of charity to their imprisoned relations, through great bodies of undisciplined pikemen, and poor women often risked their own lives to save those of wounded men or of fugitives.[2]

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[1] Taylor, pp. 79, 80; Hay, p. 168. See, too, the curious description of Jackson (pp. 22, 23), who was compelled to take part in one of the executions.

[2] The reader will find some striking instances of this in Mrs. Adams's experience. This lady had an old and infirm father in the neighbourhood of Wexford to care for, and her brother (who lost his intellect from terror) was a prisoner in Wexford gaol. She says: 'I shall ever have reason to love the poor Irish for the many proofs of heart they have shown during this disturbed season; particularly as they were all persuaded into a belief that they were to possess the dif-

In the mean time, strenuous efforts were made to arm the people with pikes. Every forge in or near Wexford was employed in manufacturing them, and the Bull-ring at Wexford was filled with kitchen tables, which the carpenters were converting into pike handles. Old folios, which had long slumbered in the libraries of country houses, were now in much request, for it was found that it was possible to use their bindings as saddles. Three cannon were mounted in a position to command the harbour, and three oyster boats in the harbour were fitted out as cruisers. They succeeded in bringing in several vessels bound for Dublin with provisions, and also in making a capture which was of great importance. Lord Kingsborough, who commanded the North Cork Militia, was ignorant of the occupation of Wexford by the rebels, and was proceeding there by water, when on June 2 he was taken prisoner by one of the armed oyster boats, together with two of his officers, and was imprisoned as a hostage. Another somewhat important acquisition of the rebels was a Protestant gentleman named Cornelius Grogan, of Johnstown. The inhabitants of his district rose to arms, and came to him asking him to be their leader, and he was either persuaded or coerced into accepting. He was an old, gouty, infirm man of little intelligence, but his assistance was important, as he was one of the largest landlords of the county, his estates being estimated at not less than 6,000*l.* a year. He rode at the head of his people into Wexford, with green banners flying before him, and amid great demonstrations of popular rejoicing. Two of his brothers were at this very time bearing arms on the side of the Government.

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ferent estates of the gentlemen of the county, and that they had only to draw lots for their possessions.' (Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland*, p. 361.)

The whole of the south of the county, except Ross and Duncannon, was now in the hands of the rebels, and in the north extreme terror prevailed. The yeomanry cavalry who had escaped from Oulart Hill had fled to Gorey, and that little town was also crowded with fugitives from the country. A few yeomen and militia, who were collected there, tried to disarm the surrounding country, and they are accused by the historians on the rebel side of committing great atrocities, and slaughtering multitudes of unarmed and perfectly inoffensive people. I have myself little doubt that these charges are at least immensely exaggerated, but it was a time when an outbreak was hourly expected, and when there was no safe place for detaining prisoners, and in the panic and violence that prevailed, human life was little valued, and very summary executions undoubtedly often followed very slight suspicions.[1] A rumour was spread that an overwhelming force was marching on

[1] Hay makes the most atrocious accusations against the yeomen about Gorey. He says, they fell upon 'the defenceless and unoffending populace, of whom they slew some hundreds;' that numbers who remained in their houses were called out, and shot at their own doors; that even infirm and decrepit men were among the victims; and that just before the evacuation of the town, 'eleven men, taken out of their beds within a mile's distance, were brought in and shot in the streets.' (*Insurrection of the County of Wexford*, pp. 133–135.) He describes, however, most of these massacres as the massacres of men who had assembled in bodies on the eminences, though (Hay says) without arms, and only for the purpose of seeing the attacks on houses, &c. which were going on below. Gordon, who lived close to Gorey, and had better means than any other historian of observing what went on there, acknowledges that the yeomen shot some of their prisoners before evacuating the town, but he gives no other support to these statements. He says that the people in the neighbourhood of Gorey were the last, and least violent of all, in the county of Wexford in rising against the established authority, which he attributes largely to the humane and conciliatory conduct of the Stopford family to their inferiors. (Gordon, p. 104.)

Gorey, and early on the morning of the 28th the troops, accompanied by a crowd of fugitives, among whom was the historian Gordon, fled to Arklow, but the commanding officer there, apparently suspecting treachery, refused to admit this great miscellaneous multitude, and most of them passed the night under the hedges near the town. Gorey in the mean time was left absolutely unprotected. The few remaining inhabitants shut themselves up in their houses, but a mad or intoxicated woman danced frantically through the abandoned streets shouting in triumph, and her cries mingled with the mournful wail of a deserted pack of hounds which had been brought into the town by one of the fugitive gentry. There, too, 'six men who had been that morning, though unarmed, taken prisoners, shot through the body and left for dead in the street, were writhing with pain,' and it was noticed that one of these dying men, who was lying against a wall, though unable to speak, threatened with his fist a Protestant who had run back into the town for something he had forgotten. The road was strewn with gunpowder spilt by the retiring troops, and as a yeoman galloped by, it exploded under his horse's hoofs, scorching terribly both man and beast. A general plunder was feared, and a band of women assembled for that purpose, but some of the remaining inhabitants organised themselves into a guard; John Hunter Gowan, a magistrate of great courage and energy, though also, according to rebel accounts, of great violence, collected a body of men to secure the town, and on the 31st, the militia and yeomanry, who had abandoned it, returned and resumed their duty.[1]

On June 1, the rebels received a serious check. A

[1] Gordon, pp. 106–108. Gordon praises greatly the activity of Gowan, and gives no support to the rebel statements about his barbarity.

body of some 4,000 of them, who appear to have been unconnected with those at Wexford, had assembled near Vinegar Hill, and attacked the village of Newtown-barry, where about 350 yeomen and militiamen were stationed, under the command of Colonel L'Estrange. The village lies on the western bank of the Slaney, about ten miles from Enniscorthy, and its capture would have opened a way to the county of Wicklow, where the conspiracy was widely spread. A priest of gigantic stature named Kearns led the rebels, and two or three other priests took prominent parts in the expedition. As they approached the village, they stopped, dropped on their knees and prayed. The rebels had one howitzer and some small swivels. Colonel L'Estrange feared to be surrounded by superior numbers, and he retired from the village, where, however, some loyalists continued to resist. The yeomen soon returned, found the rebels dispersed and pillaging through the streets, scattered them by a heavy fire of grape shot when they attempted to rally, and put them to flight with great loss. Two priests dressed in their sacerdotal vestments are said to have been among the dead.[1]

Several days passed before the formidable character of the rebellion in Wexford was fully known or fully realised. Among the most active correspondents of

[1] The attack on Newtown-barry is described with some difference of detail by Gordon (pp. 108, 109), Hay (pp. 137, 138), Musgrave (pp. 394, 395), Taylor (pp. 44-46), Byrne (i. 86-89). Byrne has the authority of an eye-witness, for he was with the rebel army in the attack, but his account does not appear to have been written till more than fifty years after, and was not published till 1863. He is especially anxious to contradict the statement of the other historians, that the rebels became generally intoxicated in Newtown-barry, and that this led to their defeat. Colonel L'Estrange estimated the rebels at not less than 10,000 or 15,000, and says that some 500 were killed. He says that his own force was only about 350 men. (See his letters, June 1 and 2, I.S.P.O.)

Pelham was a Northern magistrate named Henry Alexander, who appears at this time to have been employed at the Ordnance Office at Dublin, and who followed the course of the rebellion with great care. He was a strong politician, violently opposed to Grattan and Catholic emancipation, and his antipathies in some degree coloured his judgments, but he was evidently an acute and industrious man, with special means of information, and a long letter, which he wrote on June 3, throws some considerable light on the confused, scattered, and perplexing incidents of the earlier stages of the struggle. It is remarkable as showing the estimate which was then formed in Government circles of the nature and prospects of the rebellion, and also the small importance which was still attached to the events in Wexford.

He considered that the arrests at Bond's house, and the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, had the double effect of depriving the rebellion of all intelligent guidance, and of hastening its explosion. He had been present at the examination of a determined rebel officer, who stated that it had been the plan of the rebels to form large camps at Dunboyne, at Swords, and at the foot of the Wicklow mountains near the house of Mr. Latouche. The camp at Dunboyne had been successfully formed, but the meeting at Swords had been at once dispersed by the Fermanagh Militia, and the Wicklow rebels, who 'had proceeded to Rathfarnham to surprise the yeomanry, who were to have been betrayed to them by two of their own body (since convicted and executed, confessing their guilt),' had been defeated and driven into the mountains by Lord Roden and a party of the 5th Dragoons. A strong cordon now keeps them from the Lowlands. They have no common stock of provisions, and each man relies on what he has brought with him; 'their houses are marked, and their absence must be accounted for,' and unless they can

effect a junction with the Wexford insurgents, want of food and want of covering must soon oblige them to surrender or disperse. 'Everywhere,' he says, 'there has been a great mixture of ferocious courage in their leaders, who have precipitated themselves on death, and a rabble of followers, who suffer with a stupid indifference. At Lord Rossmore's little town they had been nearly successful, although finally repulsed with considerable loss;' but though some of the Wicklow rebels are still very defiant, many are exceedingly the reverse, and Alexander believes that they would now accept almost any terms that would save their lives. In spite of the rebellion, Colonel Ogle had undertaken to raise one thousand yeomen in the county of Wicklow, and he was accomplishing his task without difficulty. In one day, and from the small town of Bray alone, seventy recruits came in.

The assemblage at Dunboyne was very large, and the rebel force there was drawn from a large area extending as far as Drogheda. 'They have done much mischief, but are without any leader of consequence. Two gentlemen that were their prisoners assured me, their principal leader was a young man about twenty-two, the innkeeper's son of Lucan. He was killed at the fight of Tarragh [Tarah] Hill, leading his men very gallantly in full regimentals. A man of the name of Garrotty, a better kind of farmer, was next to him in command. In other respects each man did what he liked, and ranged himself under his local commander.' They had a surprising quantity and variety of arms; many more firearms than the Government had believed possible, and each recruit as he joined was given his choice of weapons. 'Their proceedings have not been as cruel and sanguinary as described, but they have been cruel to a great degree; neither have they outraged the chastity of the women, as reported. They have amongst

their neighbours certainly made distinctions, and plundered and murdered individuals merely because they were Protestants.' This, however, was due to the ungovernable fury of the ignorant and priest-ridden part of the mob, and not at all to the directions of the leaders, who are not acting as a merely Catholic party would act, but who dare not punish outrages, who fear to alienate their supporters among the priests, and who have not ventured even to issue a manifesto, lest they should offend either the Presbyterians or the priests. Some of 'the lower priests' are taking a very leading and mischievous part in the movement, and 'the politicians are obliged to take colour from the religionists.'

It is still, Alexander thinks, quite uncertain which of two wholly different courses the rebellion will take. It may appeal to the ferocity of republicanism, and run along the lines of the French Revolution, and this would probably have been its course if the French had arrived, but it is more likely that it will assume a wholly different aspect, and appeal to a very different passion. It may become an outburst of 'the long and gradually ripened vengeance' which the 'lower Catholics' cherish against those who have invaded their temples, murdered their forefathers, and appropriated their estates. This sentiment Alexander believes to be deep and ineradicable in Irish life, and the governing fact of Irish politics. 'The higher classes [of Catholics] are behaving well. Lord Fingall showed great personal gallantry at the battle of Tarragh. The King's County Militia, who behaved so well under L'Estrange, are almost all Catholics. Their bishops, and some of their noblemen and gentry, are coming forward with loyal addresses, but the great mass is decidedly against you. England judged of the Catholics by the few of the higher ranks they associated with. Conventional circumstances . . . may tie up the militia and their higher clergy,

but as long as the property of the country exists, as long as the recollection of the Brehon law of gavelkind exists, and Irish names remain, so long will the lower Irish hope to regain what they think, whether justly or unjustly, their hereditary property. I have talked to many of their prisoners, and their only motive assigned for rising was to *make Ireland their own again.* All individuals, all political sentiments, were only, as they were taught to believe them, instrumental to that great end. . . . I am sure we deceive ourselves if we do not calculate upon that permanent source of Irish disturbances, whatever occasional circumstances may retard or accelerate its operation.'

'Troops,' he says, 'are impatiently expected from England; but if the Administration, with the forces they have in Ireland, require aid to crush a rebellion confined to a corner of the country, woe be to this kingdom should the French land in force. Whenever the rebels have been fought with common judgment, let the disproportion of numbers be what it may, they have been beaten, except by the Cork Militia, who acted with great imprudence, and by Fawcett, whose conduct, as far as private letters state it, is most generally reprobated. Large bodies are forming round the rebels on every side, and all Dublin is sanguine in their expectations of their immediate destruction. Your troops are very keen, and the rebels indiscriminately massacring Protestant and Catholic soldiers, leaves no distinction in the military enthusiasm.' The general pardon, however, offered by Dundas to the Kildare rebels, was strongly reprobated among the supporters of the Government. 'If it was a capitulation, it was wrong. If it was mercy, it was misapplied, because the murderers of many of the military and others were in the mass of pardoned men. A mercy so precipitate seemed no mercy to the friends of the sufferers, and

. . . all Irish history teaches us, with Irish rebels, a negotiating Government proves the destruction of the English interest.' 'Little is known,' Alexander adds in a postscript, 'of the Wexford rebellion, except that their leaders behave more properly, and the men better conducted.'[1]

The Wexford rebellion, however, from its magnitude, and also from its sanguinary character, speedily became the centre of the scene, attracting to itself the rebel elements in the surrounding counties, and reducing all the other disturbances in Ireland almost to insignificance. Though the larger body of the rebel force that had captured Enniscorthy had proceeded to Wexford, and had chosen Bagenal Harvey as their commander, a considerable number still occupied the camp at Vinegar Hill, and they remained there from May 28 till the 20th of the following June. It was at this spot and during this time, that many of the most horrible crimes of the rebellion were committed. Vinegar Hill is the centre of a richly wooded and undulating country, watered by the Slaney, and bounded on the north and west by the blue line of the Wicklow hills. Enniscorthy lies at its foot, and an area of many miles is gaily interspersed with country houses and with prosperous farms. Near the summit of the hill stood an old windmill. The mill no longer exists, but the lower part of its masonry still remains, forming a round, grey tower, about fifteen feet in diameter, which stands out conspicuously against the green grass, and is one of the most prominent objects to be seen from Enniscorthy. Scarcely any other spot in Ireland is associated with memories so tragical and so hideous. The country around was searched and plundered, and great numbers of Protestants were brought to the rebel camp, confined

[1] Henry Alexander to Pelham, June 3, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

in the old windmill, or in a barn that lay at the foot of the hill, and then deliberately butchered. There appears indeed generally—though not always—to have been some form of trial, and although the victims were all or nearly all Protestants, they were not put to death simply for their creed. Many against whom no charge was brought, or who were popular among the people, or who could find some rebel to attest their innocence and their goodness, were dismissed in safety, with written protections from a priest. But all who had borne any part in the floggings, burnings, and other measures of repression that had been so frequent during the last few weeks; all who had shown themselves active or conspicuous on the loyalist side; all who were pronounced by the rebel tribunals to be Orangemen, were deliberately put to death. The belief which had been so industriously spread, that the Orangemen had sworn to exterminate the Catholics, had driven the people mad; and although in truth there were scarcely any Orangemen in Wexford, although until shortly before the rebellion, religious dissension had been very slight,[1]

[1] One of the Wexford rebels, before his execution, made a confession, which was formally attested, in which he said: 'Every man that was a Protestant was called an Orangeman, and every one was to be killed, from the poorest man in the country. Before the rebellion, I never heard there was any hatred between Roman Catholics and Protestants; they always lived peaceably together. I always found the Protestants better masters and more indulgent landlords than my own religion.' (Musgrave, Appendix, p. 100.) This statement, however, may be qualified by a passage in a letter written to the Duke of Richmond by Lady Louisa Conolly, who was an exceedingly good judge of the state of Ireland. She said: 'I still think that it [the rebellion] does not proceed from a religious cause, such numbers of the greatest and best Catholics are so unhappy about it, behave so well, and take such pains to discountenance anything of the kind. At Wexford there has, so far back as thirty-six years, to my knowledge, existed a violent Protestant and Catholic party; consequently these engines were set to work for the purpose of rebellion. In other places that of electioneering parties, and so

every Protestant of zeal and earnestness now fell under suspicion. Some were shot, some were piked to death, many were flogged in imitation of the proceedings of the yeomen and in order to elicit confessions of Orangism, and there were ghastly tales of prolonged and agonising deaths.

These rest, it is true, on scanty and somewhat dubious evidence, but of the blackness of the tragedy there can be no question. The dead bodies of many Protestants were left unburied, to be devoured by the swine or by the birds. Some were thrown into the river. Some were lightly covered over with sand. One man, who had been stunned, and pierced with a pike, was thrown into a grave while still alive, but a faithful dog scraped away the earth that covered him, and licked his face till he revived, and some passers-by drew him from the grave, sheltered him in their house, and tended him till he recovered. How many perished on Vinegar Hill, it is impossible to say. Musgrave, the most violent of the Protestant loyalist historians, estimates the number at more than five hundred. Gordon, the most moderate, says that unquestionable evidence proves that it can have been little less than four hundred. The Catholic historians usually confine themselves to vague generalities, and to paralleling these atrocities with the massacres of prisoners by the yeomen and the soldiers at Carnew, Dunlavin, and Gorey.[1]

The proceedings on Vinegar Hill were largely directed by priests. Many of them were collected there. The mass was daily celebrated, and fierce sermons sustained the fanaticism of the people. A hot, feverish

on; every means has been seized that could answer their design.' (MS. letter, June 18, 1798.)

[1] Numerous depositions by prisoners, who had been taken to Vinegar Hill but spared, will be found in Musgrave's Appendix. See, too, Gordon, pp. 139–142; Taylor, pp. 96–108; Hay, pp. 167, 168.

atmosphere of religious excitement prevailed, and there was a ghastly mixture of piety and murder. It was observed that religious hatred, industriously inflamed by accounts of intended massacres of Catholics by Orangemen, played here a much more powerful part than any form of political or civil rancour, and it was often those who were most scrupulously observant of the ceremonials of their religion who were the most murderous.[1] All the resources of superstition were at the same time employed to stimulate the courage of the rebels. Father John Murphy was especially looked upon as under divine protection, and it was believed that he was invulnerable, and could catch the bullets in his hand. Numbers of Protestants around Vinegar Hill sought safety and protection by conforming, and it must be added, that not a few others appear to have been saved by the intervention of the priests. Some of those who thus escaped were afterwards in imminent danger of being hanged by the soldiers, who regarded their release by the rebels as a strong presumption of their guilt.[2]

There were curious varieties in the treatment of Protestants. In large districts, every house belonging to a Protestant was burnt to the ground, but in others they were little molested. Gordon notices that the parish of Killegny, five miles from Enniscorthy, fell completely into the hands of the rebels, the Protestants in it having all been surrounded before they were able to escape. Yet not a single house in this parish was burnt, or a single Protestant killed. He attributes this chiefly 'to their temporising conformity with the Romish worship, and to the very laudable conduct of the parish priest, Father Thomas Rogers, who, without any hint of a wish for their actual conversion, encouraged the belief of it among his bigoted flock.' The Protestant clergy-

[1] Gordon, pp. 139, 195, 206, 218. [2] Ibid. p. 140.

man and his family were brought into the Romish chapel, to purge themselves from the imputation of being Orangemen, but they were afterwards suffered to remain unmolested, and when they were in want, the parish priest sent them provisions.[1]

The two immediate objects of the Wexford rebels were, the capture of Gorey and of New Ross. Like the attack on Newtown-barry, these expeditions were intended to open out a communication to other counties, and thus to produce that general insurrection throughout Ireland without which the Wexford rebellion was manifestly hopeless. On June 1, a body of rebels, variously estimated at from 1,000 to 4,000 men, many of them on horseback, advanced upon Gorey from Corrigrua Hill, where Bagenal Harvey had pitched his camp, burning many houses in their seven miles' march. Lieutenant Elliot, with three troops of yeomanry cavalry, fifty yeomanry infantry, and forty men of the Antrim and North Cork Militia, encountered them near the town, and by a steady and well-directed fire completely routed them. As was usually the case during the rebellion, the rebel fire, coming from men who were totally unacquainted with the use of firearms, went far above the troops, and only three men were killed. The victorious army abstained from pursuit, but burnt many houses in a neighbouring village, which were said to

[1] Gordon, pp. 141–143. Gordon soon after succeeded this clergyman as Rector of Killegny, and was therefore well acquainted with the circumstances of the parish. He says that there were signs that, if the rebellion had been prolonged, the immunity of the Protestants of this parish would not have lasted, and that a few of those who conformed to Catholicism during the rebellion, in order to save their lives, continued in that creed, 'probably through fear of a second insurrection.' It appears from one of the affidavits, that the rebels were sometimes contented if their prisoners consented to cross themselves, as this was considered a proof that at least they were not Orangemen. (Musgrave, Appendix, pp. 118, 119.)

belong to rebels, and then retired to Gorey, bringing with them more than 100 captured horses, some arms, and two green flags.[1]

The rebels, however, did not abandon their enterprise, and it was determined to renew it with a greatly increased force. A large part of the men on Vinegar Hill went to the camp on Corrigrua Hill, and on Sunday, June 3, a great force was marshalled there, in preparation for an attack on Gorey, which was intended for the morrow. On the same day, General Loftus arrived at Gorey, with a force of 1,500 men and five pieces of artillery. Though the reinforcement consisted almost entirely of militia and yeomanry,[2] it was believed that the loyalist force would be amply sufficient to surround and capture the rebel camp on Corrigrua Hill, and thus to crush the rebellion on this side of Wexford. About ten o'clock on the morning of the 4th, the troops marched from Gorey in two divisions, commanded respectively by General Loftus and Colonel Walpole. They moved along two different roads, for the purpose of attacking the hill on opposite sides, General Loftus taking the road to the left, and Colonel Walpole that to the right.

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[1] Gordon, pp. 112, 113; Taylor, pp. 47, 48. Gordon was himself near this battle, and his son appears to have been engaged in it. He says: 'A small occurrence after the battle, of which a son of mine was a witness, may help to illustrate the state of the country at that time. Two yeomen, coming to a brake or clump of bushes, and observing a small motion, as if some persons were hiding there, one of them fired into it, and the shot was answered by a most piteous and loud screech of a child. The other yeoman was then urged by his companion to fire; but he, being a gentleman and less ferocious, instead of firing, commanded the concealed persons to appear; when a poor woman and eight children, almost naked—one of whom was severely wounded—came trembling from the brake, where they had secreted themselves for safety.' (P. 113.)

[2] See Taylor, p. 49.

Early on the same morning, the insurgents had started on their march for Gorey. Before their departure mass was celebrated, and the priests distributed the ball cartridges. Unlike the loyalists, they had thrown out scouts, and they soon discovered the approach of the division of Walpole. This officer, though a favourite at the Castle, was totally inexperienced in actual war, and was blinded, like many others during the rebellion, by his contempt for the rebels. As he now advanced heedlessly through narrow lanes flanked by high hedges, he was suddenly attacked by a powerful rebel force under the command of Father John Murphy. A storm of grape shot failed to disperse the assailants. Walpole was shot dead. His troops were driven back with serious loss. They fled in disorder to Gorey; rushed hastily through its streets under the fire of rebels, who had taken possession of some of the houses, and did not pause in their retreat till they reached Arklow. Three cannon were taken, and at least fifty-four men were killed or missing. Among the officers who were slightly wounded was Captain Armstrong, the accuser of the Sheares's.

General Loftus had heard from a distance the noise of battle; he sent some seventy men across country to support Walpole, and a second disastrous fight took place. Loftus could not bring his artillery across the fields, but at length by a circuitous road he reached the scene of conflict, where he found the dead body of Walpole, and evident signs of the defeat of his division.[1] He followed the rebel army towards Gorey, found it at

[1] Compare Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 97–101; Gordon, pp. 114–116; Hay, pp. 49–51. Byrne was present in the action, and his account differs in some respects from that of the other historians. He represents Walpole as having been killed in the second fight. All the other accounts place his death at the beginning of the conflict.

last strongly posted on a hill that commands that town, and was met by a fire from the cannon which had been taken. Feeling himself unable either to take the post or to pass under it into the town, he hastily retreated to Carnew in the county of Wicklow, and thence to Carlow, leaving a great tract of country at the mercy of the rebels.[1]

If these, instead of stopping for some days at Gorey, had pressed immediately on, raising the country as they went, there would have been little or nothing, in the opinion of a competent judge, to check them between Wicklow and Dublin.[2] The loyalists of Gorey, who had expected complete security from the arrival of Loftus, now fled in wild confusion with the retreating troops to Arklow, leaving their property behind them. In the town there was some plunder and much drinking. About a hundred prisoners were released. Cattle were killed for the rebel camp in such numbers, and so wastefully, that the remains which were strewn about would probably have caused a pestilence, if one of the inhabitants of Gorey had not come daily to carry off and bury the hides and offal. Many men came in from the surrounding country. Orders are said to have been given, that all persons harbouring Protestants should bring them in on pain of death, and it is stated that the rebels 'shot several Protestants whom they had taken in their different marches.'[3] It is more certain, that

[1] Gordon, Taylor, Byrne, Hay.

[2] See the extracts from the 'Journal of a Field Officer' quoted in Maxwell's *History of the Rebellion*, pp. 112, 115. Byrne, however, gives reasons for thinking that an immediate march on Arklow would have been imprudent (i. 114).

[3] This is stated by Taylor (pp. 51, 52) and Musgrave (p. 406); and the 'Field Officer' cited by Maxwell says: 'Time was wasted in collecting and piking Protestants, which might have been employed with far greater advantage to the cause.' On the other hand, nothing is said about these executions by Byrne, who was present in the expedition, or

they sent out parties to burn the houses of Gowan and two or three other magistrates who were obnoxious to them.

While these things were happening at Gorey, a much larger body under the command of Bagenal Harvey attempted to take New Ross. Adopting their usual precaution of encamping always on a height, they passed from Wexford to their old quarters on the Three Rocks; thence on June 1 to Carrickbyrne Hill, which is about seven miles from New Ross, and then on the 4th to Corbet Hill, which is within a mile of that town. A few days before, they might probably have occupied it without resistance, thus opening a path into Carlow; but General Johnson was now there, at the head of at least 1,400 men, including 150 yeomen. His force was composed of the Dublin Militia under Lord Mountjoy, with detachments from the 5th Dragoons, the Clare, Donegal, and Meath Militia, the Mid-Lothian Fencibles, and some English artillery. At daybreak on the 5th the insurgents were ready for the attack, but Harvey first endeavoured to save bloodshed by sending a summons to the commander, representing the overwhelming numbers of the assailants, and summoning him to surrender the town, and thus save from total ruin the property it contained. A man named Furlong, bearing a flag of truce, undertook to carry the message, but as

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by Gordon, who was most intimately acquainted with Gorey. Hay says that, before the capture of Gorey, the military stationed there 'plundered and burned many houses, and shot several stragglers who happened to fall in their way. This provoked the insurgents to vie with their opponents in this mode of warfare, and . . . enormities, in fact, were committed on both sides.' (P. 146.) Byrne and Hay pretend that the troops intended to kill their prisoners in Gorey, and were only prevented by the rapidity with which they were driven through the town. It seems to me quite impossible to pronounce with confidence on these points.

he approached he was shot dead, and his pockets rifled. Few incidents in the rebellion did more to exasperate the rebels, and there is reason to believe that it was no misadventure, but a deliberate act.[1]

The battle that ensued was the most desperate in the rebellion. The insurgents advanced at daybreak, driving before them a quantity of black cattle to break the ranks of the troops, and they were received with a steady fire of grape. 'At near seven o'clock,' says an eye-witness who was with General Johnson, 'the army began to retreat in all directions. . . . The rebels pouring in like a flood, artillery was called for, and human blood began to flow down the street. Though hundreds were blown to pieces by our grape shot, yet thousands behind them, being intoxicated from drinking during the night and void of fear, rushed upon us. The cavalry were now ordered to make a charge through them, when a terrible carnage ensued. They were cut down like grass, but the pikemen being called to the front, and our swords being too short to reach them, obliged the horses to retreat, which put us into some confusion. We kept up the action till half-past eight, and it was maintained with such obstinacy on both sides that it was doubtful who would keep the field. They then began to burn and destroy the town. It was on fire in many places in about fifteen minutes. By this time the insurgents advanced as far as the main guard, where there was a most bloody conflict, but with the assistance of two ship guns placed in the street, we killed a great number and kept them back for some time.'[2] They soon, however, rallied, and by their onward sweep bore down the artillerymen, and obtained possession of the

[1] Gordon says: 'To shoot all persons carrying flags of truce from the rebels, appears to have been a maxim with his Majesty's forces.' (P. 118.)

[2] Taylor, pp. 56, 57.

guns. Lord Mountjoy, at the head of the Dublin County Regiment, then charged them, and a fierce hand-to-hand fight ensued, but the troops were unable to pierce the ranks of the pikemen. Lord Mountjoy was surrounded and fell, and his soldiers fiercely fighting were driven back by the overwhelming weight of the enemy, and at last crossed the bridge to the Kilkenny side of the river, where, however, they speedily rallied. Mountjoy was the first member of either House of Parliament who had fallen in this disastrous struggle, and it was bitterly noticed by the ultra-Protestant party, that he was the Luke Gardiner who had been one of the warmest friends of the Catholics, and who twenty years before had introduced into the House of Commons the first considerable measure for their relief.[1]

The town seemed now almost lost, and some of the troops in wild panic fled to Waterford. If indeed all the resources of the rebels had been exerted, nothing could have saved it. But though the insurgents were the raw material out of which some of the best soldiers in the British army have been formed; though they showed a desperate and truly admirable courage, in facing for long hours the charge of cavalry and bayonets, the volleys of disciplined soldiers, and even the storm of grape shot, they were in truth but untrained, ignorant, poverty-stricken, half-armed peasants, most of whom had never before seen a shot fired in war. Bagenal Harvey had ordered a simultaneous attack on the town in three quarters, but the men who rushed into it, infuriated by the death of Furlong, kept no discipline and acted on no plan. A large part, it is said indeed the

[1] On the death of Mountjoy, see the account by an eye-witness in Taylor, pp. 57, 58. General Johnson, in the official bulletin, says he 'fell early in the contest.' Major Vesey says: 'He was wounded and taken prisoner early. When we stormed their fort, we found his body mangled and butchered.'

great majority, of the insurgents remained at Corbet Hill, and never descended to share the dangers of their fellows, and even of those who had taken the town, a multitude soon dispersed through the streets to plunder or to drink. General Johnson succeeded in rallying his troops, and placing himself at their head, he once more charged the insurgents. A well-directed fire from the cannon which had not been taken, cleared his way, and after desperate fighting the town was regained, and the cannon recaptured and turned against the rebels. Johnson himself displayed prodigies of valour, and three horses were shot under him.

Still, the day was far from over. 'The gun I had the honour to command,' writes the eye-witness I have quoted, 'being called to the main guard, shocking was it to see the dreadful carnage that was there. It continued for half an hour obstinate and bloody. The thundering of cannon shook the town; the very windows were shivered in pieces with the dreadful concussion. I believe 600 rebels lay dead in the main street. They would often come within a few yards of the guns. One fellow ran up, and taking off his hat and wig, thrust them up the cannon's mouth the length of his arm, calling to the rest, "Blood-an'-'ounds! my boys, come take her now, she's stopt, she's stopt!" The action was doubtful and bloody from four in the morning to four in the evening, when they began to give way in all quarters. . . . I know soldiers that fired 120 rounds of ball, and I fired twenty-one rounds of canister shot with the field piece I commanded.'[1]

Some striking figures stand out amid the confused struggle in the town. In the hottest of the fire, a religious enthusiast was seen among the insurgents bearing aloft a crucifix, and though the bullets and

[1] Taylor, pp. 58, 59.

grape shot fell fast and thick, many a rebel paused for a moment before he charged, to kneel down and kiss it. A woman named Doyle, the daughter of a faggot-cutter, seemed to those who observed her to bear a charmed life. She moved to and fro where the battle raged most fiercely, cutting with a small bill-hook the belts of the fallen soldiers, and supplying the insurgents with cartridges from their cartouches. At the end of the battle, when the rebels were in retreat and about to abandon a small cannon, she took her stand beside it, and said she would remain to be shot unless there was courage enough among the fugitives to save it, and she rallied a small party, who carried it from the field. One soldier was noticed, who with reckless daring disdained any shelter or concealment, and stood conspicuous on the wall of a burning cabin, whence with cool, unerring aim, he shot down rebel after rebel. At last the inevitable shot struck him, and he fell backwards into the still smoking ruins. A townsman named McCormick, who had once been in the army, donned a brazen helmet, and was one of the most conspicuous in the loyalist ranks. Again and again, when the soldiers flinched beneath the heavy fire and fled to shelter, he drew them out, rallied them, and led them against the enemy. His wife was worthy of him. When at the beginning of the battle all the other inhabitants fled across the bridge into the county of Kilkenny, she alone remained, and employed herself during the whole battle in mixing wine and water for the soldiers. A boy named Lett, who was said to have been only thirteen, had run away from his mother and joined the insurgents. At a critical moment he snatched up a green banner, and a great body of pikemen followed him in a charge. Another young boy who was in the rebel ranks, may be noticed on account of the future that lay before him. He was John Devereux of Taghmon, who afterwards rose to fame and fortune in South

America, and became one of the most distinguished generals in the service of Bolivar.[1]

At last, the insurgents broke and fled. The flight was terrible, for it was through streets of burning and falling houses, and many are said to have perished in the flames. The streets of Ross, General Johnson reported, were literally strewn with the carcases of the rebels.[2] 'The carnage,' wrote Major Vesey, 'was shocking, as no quarter was given. The soldiers were too much exasperated, and could not be stopped. It was a fortunate circumstance,' he adds, 'for us that early in the night a man ran in from their post to acquaint us that it was their intention to attack us, and that they were resolved to conquer or die, and so in fact they acted.'[3] In the first excited estimates, the loss of the insurgents was reckoned at seven thousand men. According to the best accounts, it was about two

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[1] Many interesting particulars of this battle, from an eye-witness on the rebel side, will be found in Cloney's *Personal Narrative*; and from an eye-witness on the loyalist side, in Taylor.

[2] Report of General Johnson, inclosed by Camden to Portland, June 8, 1798.

[3] Record Office. Hay declares that there was not only an indiscriminate massacre when New Ross was taken, but that on 'the following day also, the few thatched houses that remained unburnt ... were closely searched, and not a man discovered in them left alive. Some houses set on fire were so thronged, that the corpses of the suffocated within them could not fall to the ground, but continued crowded together in an upright posture, until they were taken out to be interred.' (P. 155.) How far such stories were true, and how far they were inventions or exaggerations, intended to parallel the massacre of Scullabogue, it is impossible to say. Madden collected some stories about the capture of New Ross, from two old men who had been there, and their account went to show that there had been very general massacre, but that it had been immediately after the capture. He says, they agreed 'that, after the battle was entirely over, as many were shot and suffocated in the burning cabins and houses from four o clock in the afternoon till night, and were hanged the next day, as were killed in the fight.' (*United Irishmen*, iv. 445.)

thousand. The loss on the loyalist side was officially reckoned at two hundred and thirty men.

The battle of New Ross was still raging, when a scene of horror was enacted at Scullabogue barn, which has left an indelible mark on Irish history. The rebels had in the last few days collected many prisoners, and though some are said to have been put to death, the great majority were kept under guard near the foot of Carrickbyrne mountain, where the camp had lately been, in a lonely and abandoned country house called Scullabogue and in the adjoining barn. The number of the prisoners is stated in the Protestant accounts to have been two hundred and twenty-four, though the Catholic historians have tried to reduce it to eighty or a hundred. They were left under the guard of three hundred rebels. The accounts of what happened are not quite consistent in their details, but it appears that in an early stage of the battle, a party of runaways from the camp reached Scullabogue, declaring that the rebel army at New Ross was cut off; that the troops were shooting all prisoners, and butchering all the Catholics who fell into their hands; that orders had been issued that the prisoners at Scullabogue should be at once slaughtered; and that a priest had given peremptory instructions to that effect. The leader of the rebel guard is said to have at first hesitated and resisted, but his followers soon began the work of blood. Thirty-seven prisoners who were confined in the house were dragged out, and shot or piked before the hall door. The fate of those who were in the barn was more terrible. The rebels surrounded it and set it on fire, thrusting back with their pikes into the flames those who attempted to escape. Three only by some strange fortune escaped. It is said that one hundred and eighty-four persons perished in the barn by fire or suffocation, and that twenty of them were women and children.

The immense majority were Protestants, but there were ten or fifteen Catholics among them. Some of these appear to have been wives of North Cork Militia men, and some others, Catholic servants who had refused to quit their Protestant masters.[1]

By this time the Irish Government, which had been at first disposed to look with contempt and almost with gratification at the outbreak of the rebellion, were thoroughly alarmed. Pelham was ill in England, but he received constant information from Ireland, and his confidential correspondence shows clearly the growing sense of danger.

On June 1, Elliot wrote to him, sending bulletins of the various actions between the King's troops and the rebels, 'in all of which,' he writes, 'the former have manifested the highest spirit and intrepidity, and the most inviolable fidelity, and I cannot help adding, that the zeal and alertness of the yeomanry have contributed most essentially to the security of the metropolis. The news to-day is not pleasant. The rebels are in considerable force in the county of Wexford, and are in possession of the town, and General Fawcett, in marching with a body of troops from Waterford towards Wexford, has been obliged to retreat with the loss of several men and a howitzer. . . . The provinces of Ulster and Munster are at present in a state of tranquillity. . . . If Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the other leading traitors had not been apprehended, I am persuaded we should have had at this moment to encounter a very formidable and widely diffused rebellion. Troops from

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 121, 122; Taylor, pp. 64–70; Hay, pp. 156–159; Cloney, pp. 44, 45. Among modern books, the reader may consult the rebel historian Harwood's *History of the Rebellion*, p. 184. Taylor gives the names of ninety-five persons who were killed at Scullabogue, and he says there were others whose names he could not discover.

England are absolutely necessary, and I hope the succour will be speedy. Our army is so disposed that it is difficult to bring it together; and if a foreign enemy were in the country, we should have a fatal experience of the truth of Sir Ralph Abercromby's prediction, that a body of 5,000 men might cut off our troops in detail. My greatest apprehension at present is a *religious war*. In *my own opinion*, the evil which has resulted from the Orange Association is almost irreparable, and yet I am afraid Government will be compelled, or at least will think itself compelled, to resort, in the present emergency, to that description of force for assistance. At the same time, the Lord Lieutenant and Lord Castlereagh endeavour to repress the religious distinctions as much as possible.'[1]

Two days later Lord Camden wrote: 'The North and South continue quiet, and the formidable part of the rebellion is now confined to Wexford. . . . The cruelties the rebels have committed are dreadful, and the religious appearance which the war now bears is most alarming. Whenever our troops have had opportunities of meeting the rebels, they have behaved well, but their wildness and want of discipline is most alarming, looking as we must do to a more formidable enemy.'[2] Elliot stated that the war in Wexford had 'certainly assumed a strong religious spirit.' Lord Fingall and the leading Catholic gentry, he added, were quite sensible of the danger, and had presented a most admirable address, but the rebels would undoubtedly fan the flame of religious dissension, and the intemperance of Protestants was assisting them. 'The contest,' he said, 'is yet by no means decided; but if the rebels should not have the co-operation of a French army, I trust we shall put

[1] Elliot to Pelham, June 1, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] Camden to Pelham, June 3, 1798.

them down. If the French should be able to throw a force of 5,000 men on any part of our coast, it would render the result very dubious.' He at the same time expressed his total want of confidence in the abilities of Lake, who, 'though a brave, cool, collected man, extremely obliging, and pleasant in the transaction of business,' 'has not resources adequate to the critical situation in which he is placed.' 'The loss of Abercromby,' continued Elliot, 'will not easily be repaired.'[1]

On the 5th, before the news of the battle of New Ross arrived, Camden wrote to England in very serious and explicit terms. He relates that two attacks on the Wexford rebels had been defeated. The North, he says, may possibly be kept quiet, but this 'wholly depends upon a speedy end being put to the rebellion near Dublin. It is therefore,' he continues, 'my duty to state it to your grace as a point of indispensable necessity, as one on which the salvation of Ireland depends, that this rebellion should be instantly suppressed. No event but an instant extinction can prevent its becoming general, as it is notorious that the whole country is organised, and only waiting until the success of one part of the kingdom is apparent, before the other parts begin their operations. The Chancellor, the Speaker, Sir John Parnell, and all those friends of his Majesty's Government whom I am in the habit of consulting, have this day thought it incumbent on them to give it as their solemn opinion, and have requested me to state it as such, that the salvation of Ireland depends upon immediate and very considerable succour, that a few regiments will perhaps only be sent to slaughter or to loss, but that a very formidable force of many thousand men, sent forthwith, will probably save the kingdom, which will not exist without such a support. I

[1] Elliot to Pelham, June 3, 1798.

feel myself that their opinion is perfectly well founded, I add to it my own, and I must add that General Lake agrees with these gentlemen and me in the absolute necessity of this reinforcement.' He asks, accordingly, for at least 10,000 men.[1]

In a more confidential letter which was written next day to Pelham, the Lord Lieutenant informs his Chief Secretary that he had stated both to Portland and Pitt his decided opinion, 'that unless a very large force is immediately sent from England, the country may be lost.' He expressed his deep conviction, that Lake was not a man of sufficient ability or authority for his present position, and he adds an important recommendation, which he had apparently already sent to Pitt. 'The Lord Lieutenant ought to be a military man. The whole government of the country is now military, and the power of the chief governor is almost merged in that of the general commanding the troops. I have suggested the propriety of sending over Lord Cornwallis, . . . and I have told Pitt . . . that without the best military assistance, I conceive the country to be in the most imminent danger, and that my services cannot be useful to the King. . . . A landing, even of a small body of French, will set the country in a blaze, and I think neither our force nor our staff equal to the very difficult circumstances they will have to encounter.' In Kildare he hopes that the spirit of the rebels is broken, but 'the county of Wexford is a terrible example of their fury and licentiousness. . . . Great impatience is entertained, from no regiments having arrived from England, and indeed, it is mortifying to think that we have not received a man, although the rebellion has lasted for a fortnight.'[2]

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[1] Camden to Portland, June 5, 1798.

[2] Camden to Pelham, June 6. Lord Clare, who was never dis-

The battle of New Ross was a loyalist victory, but the extraordinary resolution and courage shown by the insurgents greatly increased the alarm. 'Although the spirit and gallantry of his Majesty's army,' wrote Camden, 'finally overcame the rebels, your grace will learn how very formidable are their numbers, led on as they are by desperation and enthusiasm. . . . Major Vesey, who commanded the Dublin County Regiment after the melancholy fate of Lord Mountjoy, describes the attack which was made as the most furious possible. . . . Our force was obliged twice to retire; they were, however, finally successful, but they were so harassed and fatigued as not to be able to make any forward movement, and your grace will observe how very formidable an enemy Colonel Crawford, who has been so long accustomed to all descriptions of service, states the rebels to be.'[1]

The letters of Colonel Crawford and Major Vesey were inclosed, and they fully bear out Camden's estimate of the seriousness of the crisis. 'The insurgents,' wrote the first officer, 'yesterday marched from Carrick-

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posed to panic, took an equally grave view. The day after Walpole's defeat, he wrote: 'Our situation is critical in the extreme. We know that there has been a complete military organisation of the people in three-fourths of the kingdom. In the North, nothing will keep the rebels quiet but a conviction that, where treason has broken out, the rebellion is merely Popish; but, even with this impression on their minds, we cannot be certain that their love of republicanism will not outweigh their inveteracy against Popery. In the capital there is a rebel army organised; and if the garrison was forced out, to meet an invading army from this side of Wexford, they would probably, on their return, find the metropolis in possession of its proper rebel troops. In a word, such is the extent of treason in Ireland, that if any one district is left uncovered by troops, it will be immediately possessed by its own proper rebels. . . . I have long foreseen the mischief, and condemned the imbecility which has suffered it to extend itself.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 3.)

[1] Camden to Portland, June 8, 1798.

burne to within a mile and a half of this place. This morning General Johnson was about giving orders for advancing against them, when *they* did it, and made as severe an attack as is possible for any troops with such arms. They were in great force, not many firearms, and no guns at first. They drove in our right, followed the troops quite into the town, and got possession of four guns. By *very great* personal exertion of General Johnson they were repulsed, and the repeated attacks they afterwards made (being far less vigorous than the first) were beaten back, and the guns retaken. They certainly have given proofs of very extraordinary courage and enthusiasm, and it is, in my opinion, very doubtful that the force at present under General Johnson would be able to subdue the Wexford insurgents. Should it spread now, it would be very serious indeed. . . . The militia behaved with spirit, but are quite ungovernable.'[1]

'These men,' wrote Beresford, 'inflamed by their priests, who accompany them in their ranks, fight with a mad desperation. It is becoming too apparent that this is to be a religious, bloody war. We must conceal it as long as we can, because a great part of our army

[1] Colonel Crawford, June 5. Two days later the same officer wrote to General Cradock, that before the attack on New Ross he had so 'contemptible an opinion of the rebels as troops,' that he thought the best plan would be to divide the army into small columns, and beat them in detail. 'But,' he says, 'I have now totally changed my opinion. I never saw any troops attack with more enthusiasm and bravery than the rebels did on the 5th. . . . To insure success we must be in considerable force. Should we be defeated, a general insurrection would probably be the consequence. During the affair of the 5th inst., large bodies of people collected behind us in the county of Kilkenny, and certainly were waiting only the event of the attack made by the people of Wexford. In short, I do not think General Johnson's and General Loftus's corps, even when united, sufficiently strong—not nearly so.' (June 7, Record Office.)

and most of our militia are Papists, but it cannot be long concealed. . . . If the militia should turn or the French come before the contest is ended and the rebellion crushed, Ireland goes first, and Great Britain follows, and all Europe after.' 'The only comfort we have is, that the Northern Protestants begin to see their danger, and are arming in our favour, but . . . Government are afraid to trust them, lest the Papists of the militia and army should take affront.' [1]

Castlereagh was acting as Chief Secretary during the illness of Pelham, and though he was by no means inclined to exaggerate danger, he took an equally grave view of the situation. 'The rebellion in Wexford,' he wrote, 'has assumed a more serious shape than was to be apprehended from a peasantry, however well organised.' 'An enemy that only yielded after a struggle of twelve hours is not contemptible. Our militia soldiers have, on every occasion, manifested the greatest spirit and fidelity, in many instances defective subordination, but in none have they shown the smallest disposition to fraternity, but, on the contrary, pursue the insurgents with the rancour unfortunately connected with the nature of the struggle. Had the rebels carried Ross, the insurrection would have immediately pervaded the counties of Waterford and Kilkenny.' Their forces 'consist of the entire male inhabitants of Wexford, and the greatest proportion of those of Wicklow, Kildare, Carlow, and Kilkenny. From Carlow to Dublin, I am told, scarcely an inhabitant is to be seen. I am sorry to inform you, that our fears about the North are too likely to be realised. . . . Rely on it, there never was in any country so formidable an effort on the part of the people. It may not disclose itself in the full extent of its preparation if it is early met with

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 9, 10, 13.

vigour and success, but our forces cannot cope in a variety of distant points with an enemy that can elude an attack when it is inexpedient to risk a contest.'[1] 'Wexford, the peaceable, the cultivated,' wrote Cooke, 'has been and is the formidable spot. You will recollect, there were no returns, no delegates from Wexford. How artificial! You recollect in Reynolds' evidence that Lord Edward wanted to go to France, to hasten a landing from frigates at Wexford.[2] Be assured the battle of New Ross was most formidable. . . . It was a grand attempt of the rebels, well planned and boldly attempted, and the success would have been ruinous. Johnston deserves greatly. He placed himself at the head of the Dublin County Regiment when the affair grew desperate, and by personal exertions succeeded.' 'The Dublin yeomanry are wonderful.'[3] A landing of the French or the slightest disaster, Camden again repeated, might make the situation most alarming. 'The most able generals, and a most numerous and well-disciplined army, can alone save Ireland from plunder, perhaps from separation from Great Britain.'[4]

The apprehensions expressed in these letters would probably have proved in no degree exaggerated if the French had landed, or if the rebellion had spread. But day after day the insurgents in Wexford looked in vain across the sea for the promised succour. The North, in which they had placed so much trust, was still passive, and although the banner of religion had been raised, and priests were in the forefront of the battle, the Catholic province of Connaught and the great Catholic counties of the South were perfectly tranquil.

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[1] Castlereagh to Pelham.

[2] See Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 412.

[3] Cooke to Pelham, June 3, 1798.

[4] Camden to Portland, June 10, 1798. See, too, a number of very interesting letters on the situation, in the *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 3–10.

The insurrection was still confined to a few central counties, and outside Wexford it was nowhere formidable.

The tranquillity of the greater part of Ulster during the rebellion, the defection of the Presbyterians from the movement of which they were the main originators, and the great and enduring change which took place in their sentiments in the last years of the eighteenth century, are facts of the deepest importance in Irish history, and deserve very careful and detailed examination. It would be an error to attribute them to any single cause. They are due to a concurrence of several distinct influences, which can be clearly traced in the correspondence of the time. Much was due to the growth of the Orange movement, which had planted a new and a rival enthusiasm in the heart of the disaffected province, and immensely strengthened the forces opposed to the United Irishmen;[1] and much also to the success of long-continued military government. Martial law had prevailed in Ulster much longer than in the other provinces, and, as we have seen, an enormous proportion of the arms which had been so laboriously accumulated, had been discovered and surrendered. When the rebellion broke out, all the measures of precaution that were adopted in Dublin were taken in the towns of Ulster. The yeomanry were placed on permanent duty, and patrolled the streets by night. The inhabitants were forbidden to leave their houses between nine at night and five in the morning, and compelled to post up the names of those who were within them, which were to be called over whenever the military

[1] 'Our Northern accounts are still very good; no stir there except on the right side. The people called Orangemen (whose principles have been totally misrepresented) keep the country in check, and will overpower the rebels, should they stir.' (Beresford to Auckland, June 1; *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 442.)

authorities desired. The arrival of every stranger was at once registered. A proclamation was issued, ordering all persons who were not expressly authorised to possess arms and ammunition, to bring them in within an assigned period, under pain of military execution, and promising at the same time that if they did so, they would be in no respect molested, and that no questions would be asked. At Belfast a court-martial sat daily in the market-place for the trial of all persons who were brought before it. One man, in whose house arms were found, was sentenced to eight hundred lashes, received two hundred, and then gave information which led to the flogging of a second culprit. About four hundred stand of arms were surrendered in a few days. One of the great anxieties of the authorities at Belfast was to discover six cannon, which had belonged to the Belfast volunteers, and had been carefully concealed. They were all found in the last week of May—two of them through information derived from an anonymous letter. Several persons were flogged for seditious offences. Many others who were suspected, but against whom there was no specific charge, were sent to the tender, and seven cars full of prisoners from Newry were lodged in Belfast gaol.[1]

Such measures, carried out severely through the province, made rebellion very difficult, and it was to them that Lord Clare appears to have mainly attributed the calm of Ulster. It is, however, very improbable that they would have been sufficient, if they had not been supported by a real change of sentiments. The sturdy, calculating, well-to-do Presbyterians of the North might have risen to co-operate with a French army, or even to support a general, though unaided

[1] *Historical Collections relating to Belfast*, pp. 479-483; McSkimin's *History of Carrickfergus*, p. 97.

insurrection, if it had begun with a successful blow, and had been directed by leaders whom they knew. They were more and more disinclined to throw in their lot with disorderly Catholic mobs, assembled under nameless chiefs, who were plundering and often murdering Protestants, but who were in most cases scattered like chaff before small bodies of resolute yeomen. The rebellion in Leinster had assumed two forms, which were almost equally distasteful to Ulster. In some counties the rebels were helpless mobs, driven to arms by hope of plunder, or by fear of the Orangemen, or by exasperation at military severities, but destitute of all real enthusiasm and convictions, and perfectly impotent in the field. In Wexford they were very far from impotent, but there the struggle was assuming more and more the character of a religious war, and deriving its strength from religious fanaticism. The papers, day by day, told how the rebels were imprisoning, plundering, and murdering the Protestants; how the priests in their vestments were leading them to the fight, as to a holy war, which was to end in the extirpation of heresy; how Protestants were thronging the chapels to be baptised, as the sole means of saving their lives. In these accounts there was much that was exaggerated, and much that might be reasonably palliated or explained, but there was also much horrible truth, and the scenes that were enacted at Vinegar Hill and Scullabogue made a profound and indelible impression on the Northern mind. Men who had been the most ardent organisers of the United Irish movement, began to ask themselves whether this insurrection was not wholly different from what they had imagined and planned, and whether its success would not be the greatest of calamities. The tide of feeling suddenly changed, and even in Belfast itself, it soon ran visibly towards the Government.

The change of sentiment was greatly accelerated by other causes. The keynote of the conspiracy had been an alliance with France, for the establishment by French assistance of an Irish republic. But the utter failure of the French to profit by the golden opportunity of the Mutiny of the Nore; the mismanagement of the Bantry Bay expedition; the defeat of Camperdown, and the disappointment of several subsequent promises of assistance, had shaken the confidence of the more intelligent Northerners in French assistance, while many things had lately occurred which tended to destroy their sympathy with French policy. The United Irish movement, as we have seen, was essentially and ardently republican; and although it assumed a different character when it passed into an ignorant and bigoted Catholic population, this change had not extended to the North. Republicanism from the time of the American Revolution had been deeply rooted among the Presbyterians of Ulster. They had readily accepted those doctrines about the rights of man, which Rousseau had made the dominant political enthusiasm of Europe, and it was as the dawn of an era of universal liberty that the French Revolution, in spite of all the horrors that accompanied it, had been welcomed with delight. The precedent by which their leaders justified their appeal for French assistance was that of 1688, when the heads of the English party opposed to James II. invited over the chief of the neighbouring republic with a small Dutch army, to assist them in establishing constitutional liberty.[1]

But although the French had given many assurances that they would leave the Irish free to settle their Constitution as they pleased, the evident tendency of the Revolution towards a military, conquering, and absorb-

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 204.

ing despotism had produced a profound effect. The anxiety of McNevin, when he went to France as the agent of the party, to limit the French contingent to ten thousand men, clearly displayed it.[1] Wolfe Tone mentions in his journal, the disgust and indignation with which he read the arrogant proclamation of Buonaparte to the republic of Genoa, in the summer of 1797, when that Republic passed wholly under French influence, and when its Constitution was remodelled under the direction of a French minister. Such a proclamation, Tone said to Hoche, if it had been published in Ireland, 'would have a most ruinous effect.' 'In Italy such dictation might pass, but never in Ireland, where we understand our rights too well to submit to it.'[2]

The destruction, or complete subjugation to French influence, of the Dutch Republic, of the Republic of Venice, and of the Republic of Genoa, was soon followed by a series of atrocious outrages directed against the Swiss Confederation. The Revolution of the 18th fructidor, which drove Barthélemy and Carnot from power, and the treaty of Campo Formio, which freed France from all apprehension of the Emperor, were very unfavourable to the interests of Switzerland, and it became manifest that it was the intention of the French Government to force on a conflict. It is not here necessary to enumerate the many arrogant demands by which this policy was carried out. It is sufficient to say, that the presence in Switzerland of a certain number of discontented democrats, who played a part greatly resembling that of the United Irishmen in Ireland, powerfully assisted it. In a time of perfect peace a French army crossed the border; all resistance was crushed by force; Switzerland was given up to military violence, and to undisguised and systematic

[1] *Secret Committee*, pp. 16, 17. [2] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 416.

spoliation. Its ancient Constitution was destroyed, and a new Constitution, dictated from Paris, was imposed upon it.[1]

But there was another republic which was far dearer to the Ulster Presbyterians than Switzerland. No fact in the Irish history of the latter half of the eighteenth century is more conspicuous than the close connection that subsisted between the North of Ireland and New England. The tree of liberty, according to the United Irish phraseology, had been sown in America, though it had been watered in France, and the great number of Irish Protestants who had emigrated to America, and the considerable part which they had borne in the American Revolution, gave a tinge of genuine affection to the political sympathy that united the two communities. But at the critical period at which we have now arrived France and the United States were bitterly hostile, and apparently on the very brink of war.

The conflict originated with the commercial treaty which had been negotiated between England and the United States in 1794 and 1795. It had been fiercely resented in Paris, and the ill feeling it created had been rapidly envenomed by disputes about the rights of neutral vessels. I have elsewhere related the controversy on this question, which had sharply divided England in 1778 and 1780 from France, Russia, and other continental Powers.[2] The English maintained the right of seizing merchandise belonging to a hostile Power, even when it was carried in neutral vessels. The continental Powers maintained that free ships made free goods, that a neutral Power had the right of carry-

[1] See Mallet du Pan's *Essai Historique sur la Destruction de la Ligue et de la Liberté Helvétique.* There are some excellent chapters on this revolution in the *Annual Register* of 1798. See, too, Sybel.

[2] *History of England*, v. 64–66.

ing on commerce with belligerent Powers, and conveying all goods belonging to them which were not, according to a strictly defined rule, contraband of war. The United States strongly maintained the continental doctrine, but they had never been able to make England acknowledge or observe it. France, on the other hand, was its principal supporter. She had specially introduced it into her treaty with America in 1778; and even since the war with England had begun, she had formally disclaimed all right of interfering with belligerent goods on American vessels. But a considerable carrying trade of English goods by American ships had grown up during the war, and France, finding herself seriously damaged by her adhesion to the continental doctrine, which her enemy refused to acknowledge, suddenly changed her policy; issued a decree ordering her privateers and ships of war to treat the vessels of neutral nations in the same manner in which those nations suffered themselves to be treated by the English; and formally notified this decree to the Americans. She at the same time contended that the United States, by entering into a commercial treaty with England, had forfeited the privileges of the treaty of 1778. The immediate consequence was, that numerous American vessels were captured by French or Spanish cruisers. From San Domingo especially, a swarm of French corsairs went forth to prey upon American commerce.

John Adams, who was then President, tried to arrive at some arrangement by negotiation, and three American envoys came to Paris in October 1797. They obtained interviews with Talleyrand, but their reception was exceedingly discouraging. The Directory refused to receive them, and they were told in language of extreme haughtiness that the French Government were exasperated by the policy of the United States, and still more by the language of its President, and would

receive no American envoy without ample avowals, reparations, and explanations. Soon, however, it was intimated to them that one way was open to them by which they could secure their neutrality, and save themselves from the threatened vengeance of France. The great want of the French Republic was money, and the envoys were informed that, if America desired to obtain any concession from France or any security for her commerce, she must purchase it by a large and immediate loan. Money, it was said, and much money, they must be prepared to furnish. It was added, that in addition to this loan, a sum of about 50,000*l.* should be given to the members of the Directory. Many other Powers, the envoys were told, had consented to buy peace from France, and America would find it equally her interest to do so. The force of France was irresistible.

The startled envoys replied, that such a demand lay utterly beyond their instructions, and had certainly never been contemplated by the Government which appointed them. They were prepared, however, to send one of their number across the Atlantic to ask for fresh instructions, if the French Government would, in the mean time, put a stop to the capture of American ships, and negotiate on the differences between the two countries. America, they said, had always been friendly to France, but the present state of things was even more ruinous than war. Property to the value of more than fifty millions of dollars had been already taken. Americans had been treated by France in every respect as enemies, and it was for them to ask for reparation. Not a dollar of American money, they were very certain, would go in a loan to the French, unless American property, unjustly confiscated, was previously restored, and further hostilities suspended. Unless these conditions were complied with, they would not even consult their

Government concerning a loan. They were, however, perfectly prepared to negotiate a commercial treaty with France, as liberal as that which they had made with England.

The answer was a peremptory refusal. No confiscated property, they were told, should be returned, and no promise was given that the capture of American property should cease. Unless part, at least, of the money demanded was forthcoming, the envoys must leave Paris, nay more, the property of all Americans would probably be confiscated. The United States should take warning by the fate of Venice, for that fate might soon be their own. A new decree was issued in January 1798 ordering that every ship of a neutral Power, which contained any goods of English fabric or produce, should be deemed a lawful prize, even though those goods belonged to neutrals, and that all ships which had so much as touched at an English port should be excluded from French harbours. Two of the American envoys were sent back to obtain fresh instructions. The third was, for the present, allowed to remain at Paris.

When these things became known in America, they excited a storm of indignation. Adams at once obtained power from the Congress to increase the army and navy, and to strengthen the defences. Washington was called from his retreat, and placed at the head of the army. As the capture of American vessels was still of almost daily occurrence, the Congress granted liberty to fit out privateers for the purpose of making reprisals. The envoy who had remained in Paris was immediately recalled, and the American Government appealed to the judgment of their own people and of the whole civilised world, by publishing all the despatches of their envoys.[1]

[1] The despatches will be found in full in the appendix of the *Annual Register* for 1798. See, too, Sybel, *Histoire de l'Europe*

The declaration of war which seemed inevitable did not take place, though on both sides innumerable corsairs were fitted out. The ambition of France took other directions; the victories of Nelson soon made her very impotent upon the sea, and about two years later Buonaparte again reversed her policy, and made a new and friendly arrangement with the Americans. But the proof which was furnished by these despatches, of the spirit in which France acted towards the country which beyond all others seemed attached to her, made a profound impression throughout Europe. 'Not all the depredations of the French in Germany, the Netherlands, Holland, Switzerland, and Italy,' wrote a contemporary annalist, 'no, not their plunder of the Papal territories, afforded to the minds of men so convincing a proof that the French Republic was governed, not more by a thirst of universal dominion than by a rage for plunder, as the attempt to subject the Americans to tribute.' In no other European country, however, did this episode prove so important as in Ireland. In a most critical period of Irish history, it gave a complete check to the enthusiasm with which the French Revolution had hitherto been regarded by the Northern Presbyterians, and the sudden revulsion of feeling which it produced was one great cause of the tranquillity of Ulster.

A few extracts from contemporary letters will be sufficient to illustrate the progress of this change, and to justify my analysis of its causes. No one knew Ulster better than Dean Warburton, and on May 29 he wrote that all there was quiet, and that he believed it would continue so if matters went well in the rest of Ireland. 'The cunning and wary Northerners,' he continued, 'see that no revolution can be effected with-

pendant la Révolution (French translation), v. 62–67, 150–152; and Adams's *Life*.

out a foreign aid (of which they now despair). The steadiness and loyalty of our militia have damped the hopes and expectations of the disaffected, and I think the Northern Dissenter will now quietly be a spectator of that destructive flame which he himself originally kindled up, and will take no active part in the present attempt.'[1]

Camden wrote that the report from Ulster was still favourable, but that he could only infer from it, 'that with their disaffection they [the Northerners] join much prudence; though there are many persons who conceive an alteration has taken place in the public mind there, from the American correspondence, and from the Catholics of the South making the present so much a religious question.'[2] 'The quiet of the North,' wrote Cooke, 'is to me unaccountable; but I feel that the Popish tinge in the rebellion, and the treatment of France to Switzerland and America, has really done much, and in addition to the army, the force of Orange yeomanry is really formidable.'[3]

A report from Ulster in the Government papers, written apparently in the last days of May, declared that the accounts of Catholic atrocities in the rebellion were already having a great effect on the Presbyterians, disinclining them from joining with the Catholics, making them dread Catholic ascendency, and reviving the old antipathy of sects.[4]

[1] Dean Warburton to Cooke (Loughgilly), May 29, 1798.

[2] Camden to Portland, June 2, 1798.

[3] Cooke to Wickham, June 2, 1798.

[4] I.S.P.O. This paper is only signed by initials. It is among those of the first days of June. So Beresford, on the last day of May, after describing the atrocities in Wexford, says: 'Bad and shocking as this is, it has its horrid use; for now there is a flying off of many Protestant men who were united, and the North consider it as a religious war, and, by many letters this day, have resolved to be loyal.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 439.)

'The Northerners,' wrote Henry Alexander, ten days later, 'do not like the Papists. They feel the injuries to America. They have not the plenty of provisions the Wexfordians had. They possess the escheated counties; and their bleachers, though they would huckster with any man who would promise to govern them cheapest, will not like the destruction of their greens.'[1]

The letters of Bishop Percy throw much interesting light on this subject. He was in Dublin while the rebellion was at its height, but his diocese of Dromore was in the heart of the disaffected part of Ulster, and in addition to the intelligence he received from members of the Government at Dublin, he had his own correspondents in Ulster. 'The North,' he wrote, 'is perfectly safe; the Protestants being here in some places murdered by the Irish Papists, has turned all the Dissenters against them.' His vicar-general wrote to him that his diocese was absolutely tranquil, that the arms were being generally surrendered; that a judicious combination of severity and indulgence was breaking up the conspiracy, and that the conspirators had been profoundly disgusted by the disappearance of some of their treasurers. 'Another cause,' wrote the vicar-general, 'which has alienated our Northern Irish republicans from France, is the vile treatment shown to Switzerland and America; to the latter of whom they were exceedingly devoted, especially at Belfast, where they are now signing resolutions of abhorrence of French tyranny.'[2]

'A wonderful change,' wrote the Bishop, a few days later, 'has taken place among republicans in the North, especially in and near Belfast. They now abhor the

[1] Henry Alexander to Pelham, June 10, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] Bishop Percy to his wife, May 28, 29, 1798. (British Museum.)

French as much as they formerly were partial to them, and are grown quite loyal. Last Monday the King's birthday was celebrated at Belfast, with as much public rejoicing as it ever was at St. James's. Not only the whole town was illuminated, but bonfires were lighted on all the adjoining hills. This could not be counterfeit. . . . It is owing to the scurvy treatment which the French have shown to the United States of America, so beloved and admired by our Northern Republicans. You know how enthusiastically fond they were of the Americans, and now that the latter must fly to Great Britain for protection, their Irish friends are become the warm adherents of Great Britain. They have sent the most loyal address to Government, with offers of any service that shall be accepted. . . . The murder of the Protestants in the South will prevent them ever joining again with them, much less in the present rebellion.'[1]

At Omagh alone, not less than six thousand Presbyterians offered their services without expense to the Government, and their example was followed in other places. The ranks of the Orangemen at the same time rapidly filled, and great multitudes of them offered to march to any part of the kingdom to suppress rebellion.[2] The attempts by intimidation or persuasion to

[1] Bishop Percy to his wife, June 8, 1798. On the illuminations at Belfast, see *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 8. Another remarkable letter on the state of Ulster is from Lord William Bentinck, who had resided in Armagh for two years. 'The Dissenters,' he wrote, 'whom I knew to be the most disaffected a year and a half ago, are now ready to support the existing Government, and I believe with sincerity. I do not fancy that their opinions are much changed or their natural inclination to republicanism extinguished, but their affection for their properties, which they conceive in danger from what they happily term a Popish rebellion, has been the cause of their present inaction. They prefer a Protestant to a Popish Establishment.' (June 21, 1798, I.S.P.O.)

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 14, 1798.

prevent the enrolment of a yeomanry force, had either ceased or been completely defeated. According to Musgrave, the four counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry, and Armagh together furnished no less than fourteen thousand yeomen, and he adds that three-fourths of them were Presbyterians; that most of them were Orangemen, and that, in spite of the recent disaffection of the Presbyterian body, he did not know a single case of a Presbyterian yeoman having betrayed his oath of allegiance.[1]

It could hardly, however, have been expected that a conspiracy so widespread as that in Ulster should produce no effect. Alarming intelligence now came to Dublin, that on June 7 a rebellion had broken out in the North. A few months before, such intelligence would have portended a struggle of the most formidable dimensions, but it soon appeared that the rebellion was practically confined to the two counties of Antrim and Down, and it was suppressed in a few days. In the county of Antrim the only important operation was an attack, on June 7, on the town of Antrim by a body of rebels whose strength is very variously estimated, but probably consisted of from 3,000 to 4,000 men. Their leader was a young Belfast cotton manufacturer, named Henry Joy McCracken, one of the original founders of the United Irish Society, and one of the very few of those founders who ever appeared in the field. He was a man of singularly amiable private character, and is said to have formerly taken a part in establishing the first Sunday-school at Belfast.[2] A brother of William Orr was conspicuous among the rebel officers.

As I have already stated, the Government had an informer in the Provincial Committee of Ulster, who had long been giving information about the Ulster

[1] Musgrave, p. 194.

[2] See Harwood, p. 203.

rebels, and who furnished reports which were regularly transmitted to London, and which established the guilt of every leader of consequence in the province.[1] Through his information they were fully prepared for the attack, and Antrim was defended by Colonel Lumley with two or three troops of dragoons, two cannon, and a considerable body of yeomanry. The rebels had a cannon,[2] but it was disabled at the second shot. They were chiefly armed with pikes, but some hundreds of them had muskets. There was a sharp fight, lasting for between two and three hours, in the streets of Antrim and in the adjoining demesne of Lord Massareene, and the rebels showed very considerable courage. They endured without flinching several discharges of grape shot; repulsed with heavy loss a charge of cavalry; killed or wounded about fifty soldiers, and forced back the troops into Lord Massareene's grounds. Colonel Lumley and three or four other officers were wounded. Two officers were killed, and Lord O'Neil fell, pierced with a

[1] Nicholas Magean. Castlereagh says: 'It was upon his information that General Nugent was enabled so to dispose his force—at that time very much weakened by detaching to the South—as to attack the rebels in those points of assembly, and to gain those decisive advantages over them, before their strength was collected, which have completely repressed the insurrection in the North, at least for the present.' (Castlereagh to Wickham, private, June 22, 1798.) Castlereagh mentions that the informer was in custody at his own desire, but refused to give evidence. This informer's name is also spelt Maguan, Magein, Magin, and Maginn. Pollock, in a letter dated July 13, 1798, mentions that Wickham said that after the trials, 'a letter should be written by the Lord Lieutenant to the Treasury in England, stating the magnitude and importance of Magin's services, that by his means the rebels in Ulster were prevented taking the field.' (I.S.P.O. Compare the *Report of the Secret Committee* of 1798, app. xiv.; and Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 458, 459; iv. 54.) There is reason to believe that he made a stipulation, that no man should lose his life on his evidence.

[2] According to another account, two, but only one appears to have been brought into action.

pike, and died in a few days. The rebels, however, were at last driven back, and on the arrival of some additional troops from Belfast and from the camp at Blaris, they fled precipitately, leaving from 200 to 400 men on the field.[1]

The little town of Larne had been attacked early on the same morning by some rebels from Ballymena, but a small body of Tay Fencibles, aided by a few loyal inhabitants, easily drove them back. Randalstown and Ballymena were the same day occupied by rebels with little resistance, and some yeomen were taken prisoners, but the defeat of the 7th had already broken the rebellion in Antrim. The rebels found that the country was not rising to support them, and that there was absolutely no chance of success. Disputes and jealousies are said to have arisen in their ranks between the Protestants and the Catholics. Multitudes deserted, and a profound discouragement prevailed. Colonel Clavering issued a proclamation ordering an immediate surrender of arms and prisoners, and as it was not complied with, he set fire to Randalstown, with the exception of the places of worship and a few houses belonging to known loyalists. Two yeomanry officers were immediately after released, and the inhabitants of Ballymena sent to Clavering, offering to surrender their arms and prisoners, if their town was not burnt.[2] The small remnant of the rebel force returned, on the 11th, to Dunagore Hill. Clavering, contrary to the wishes of some hot loyalists, offered a pardon to all except the leaders, if they surrendered their arms and returned to their allegiance, and this offer led to their almost complete dispersion. McCracken with a very few followers attempted

[1] See the accounts (differing in many details) in Musgrave, Gordon, McSkimin; in the official bulletin (*Saunders's Newsletter*, June 11), and in Teeling's *Personal Narrative*.

[2] General Nugent to General Lake, June 18, 1798.

to escape, but he was soon arrested, and tried and executed at Belfast. Another Antrim leader, named James Dickey, was not long after hanged in the same town, and he is stated by Musgrave to have declared before his execution, that the eyes of the Presbyterians had been opened too late; that they at last understood from the massacres in Leinster, that if they had succeeded in overturning the Constitution, they would then have had to contend with the Papists.[1]

The insurrection in the county of Down was as brief, and hardly more important. It was intended to have broken out on the same day as that in the county of Antrim, and in that case it might have been very serious, but the precipitation of the Antrim rebels prevented this, and the battle at Antrim on the 7th put an end to all hopes of co-operation. On June 9, however, a large body of rebels assembled in the barony of Ards, and they succeeded in forming an ambuscade, and surprising, near Saintfield, Colonel Stapleton, who with some York Fencibles and yeomanry cavalry had hastened to the scene. The rebels were at first completely successful, and they drove the cavalry back in confusion with a loss of about sixty men, including three officers and also the rector of Portaferry, who had volunteered to serve. The infantry soon rallied, repulsed their assailants, and became masters of the field, but the affair was at best indecisive, for the troops were ordered to retire to Belfast, no prisoners were taken, and the rebels, having suffered but little, occupied Saintfield.

[1] Musgrave, p. 184. Musgrave must always be read with suspicion when he treats of any question relating to Catholics; but I see no improbability in this statement, and it is corroborated by the 'Field Officer' quoted by Maxwell, who says: 'The accounts of the bloody goings-on in Wexford had their full share in bringing the Northerners to their senses, as many of them made no scruple of declaring at the place of execution.' (Maxwell's *History of the Rebellion*, p. 217.)

Next day most of the surrounding country was in arms. Newtown-Ards was at first successfully defended, but then evacuated and occupied without resistance. On the 11th, Portaferry was attacked, but after a most gallant defence by the local yeomanry, aided by the guns of a revenue cutter which was lying in the river, the assailants were driven back with much loss. The rebels then in a great body, numbering, it is said, at one time not less than 7,000 men, encamped in a strong position behind Ballinahinch, on the property of Lord Moira. They selected as their leader Henry Monroe, a linendraper of Lisburn, who had been formerly an active volunteer, and who had some slight military knowledge and capacity.

General Nugent marched hastily to encounter them with a force of 1,500 or 1,600 men, partly yeomanry and partly regular troops, and accompanied by eight cannon. As they proceeded through the rebel country, their path was marked by innumerable blazing cottages, set fire to on their march.[1] On the evening of the 12th they succeeded, by a heavy cannonade, in driving the rebels from the strong post on Windmill Hill, and a rebel colonel, who defended it to the last, was taken there, and immediately hanged. The rebels had also taken some prisoners, but they did them no harm, and General Nugent relates that his troops at this time surrounded a wood in which the rebels had gathered, rescued the yeomanry prisoners, and killed nearly all the defenders. In the middle of the night Ballinahinch was occupied by troops, Monroe concentrating his forces on a neighbouring height. There was much division in the rebel camp. One party counselled a night attack, and there were reports that the troops were engaged in pillage or incapacitated by intoxication, but Monroe

[1] Teeling, p. 250.

determined to await the daybreak. It has been said that dissension broke out between the Catholics and the Protestants, and it is at least certain that some hundreds of rebels, in the night, fell away in a body.[1] Perhaps the fact that many of them were half armed, hopeless of success, and driven unwillingly into the rebellion, furnishes the best explanation. General Nugent estimated the rebel force on the evening of the 12th at near 5,000 men, but believed that as many persons who had been pressed into the service, and who were totally unarmed, had escaped during the night, there were not nearly so many on the morning of the 13th.[2]

Shortly before daybreak on that morning, Monroe attacked the troops in Ballinahinch. The rebels, according to the confession of their enemies, showed signal courage, rushing to the very muzzles of the cannon, where many of them were blown to pieces, and where bodies were found as black as coal from the discharge. Once or twice their impetuosity seemed to carry all before it; but at last, superior discipline and greatly superior arms asserted their inevitable ascendency, and the rebels were totally defeated and dispersed with the loss of 400 or 500 men. The loss on the loyalist side was only twenty-nine. Some green flags

[1] Musgrave declares that the rebels in the battle of Ballinahinch were 'Protestant Dissenters, with few if any Roman Catholics, as 2,000 of them deserted the night before the battle, and inflamed the Presbyterians very much against them.' (P. 557.) Teeling, who gives the best Catholic account of the battle, says that, in the night before, 'a division of nearly 700 men, and more generally armed with muskets than the rest, marched off in one body with their leader;' but he attributes this to their discontent at Monroe's refusal to make a midnight attack, and he makes no mention of any religious differences. (*Personal Narrative*, pp. 255, 256.) The 'Field Officer' whose narrative is quoted by Maxwell, believed that there was both military dissension and religious jealousy. (*History of the Rebellion*, p. 218.)

[2] Printed bulletin.

and six small unmounted cannon were among the spoil. No prisoners were made during the fight, for the troops gave no quarter, but nine or ten fugitives were captured almost immediately after, and at once hanged. The town of Ballinahinch was burnt almost to the ground. One of the correspondents of Bishop Percy, who visited it shortly after the battle, says that its smoke rose to heaven like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that not more than three houses in it were unscathed.[1]

'The conduct of the troops,' writes Lord Castlereagh, describing this battle to Pelham, 'was everything one could wish *in point of spirit*. Their discipline not much improved by free quarters. Nugent writes in the highest praise of the Northern yeomanry; he describes them for this particular service as equal to the best troops.'[2] 'The rebels,' he wrote in another letter, 'fought at Ballinahinch, as at Wexford, with determined bravery, but without the fanaticism of the Southerners. They made the attack, and used some wretched ship guns, mounted on cars, with considerable address. . . . Upon the whole, the North is divided in sentiment. We have numerous adherents, and I am inclined to hope that the effort there will prove rather a diversion than the main attack.'[3] It is a curious fact, that in

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[1] See the report of General Nugent, June 13; and some interesting letters, describing the battle, sent by Bishop Percy to his wife. See, too, the accounts in Teeling's *Personal Narrative*, in Maxwell and in Musgrave. The fact that the property of Lord Moira was the centre of the rebellion in Ulster, was not forgotten by the opponents of that nobleman:

> A certain great statesman, whom all of us know,
> In a certain assembly no *long* while ago,
> Declared from this maxim he never would flinch—
> That no town was so loyal as Ballinahinch, &c.
>
> *Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin*, pp. 289, 290.

[2] Castlereagh to Pelham, June 16, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[3] Castlereagh to Elliot, June 16, 1798. (Ibid.)

this battle the overwhelming majority of the rebels were Protestants, while the Monaghan Militia, an almost exclusively Catholic regiment, formed a large portion of the loyalist force.

The short Protestant rebellion in Ulster was almost wholly untarnished by the acts of cruelty and murder that were so frequent in the South,[1] but the repression was not less savage and brutal. After the decisive battle of Ballinahinch, however, General Nugent followed the example of Colonel Clavering in Antrim, and offered pardon and protection to all rebels, except the leaders, who would lay down their arms and return to their allegiance. Should that submission not be made, the proclamation continued, 'Major-General Nugent will proceed to set fire to, and totally destroy, the towns of Killinchy, Killileagh, Ballinahinch, Saintfield, and every cottage and farmhouse in the vicinity of those places, carry off the stock and cattle, and put every one to the sword who may be found in arms.' At Belfast, Colonel Durham warned the inhabitants, that if any traitor was found concealed, with the knowledge or connivance of the owner, in any house in that town or

[1] Bishop Percy, afterwards speaking of the barbarities in other parts of Ireland, adds: 'Thank God, our rebels in this country, being chiefly Protestant Dissenters, were of very different complexion, and were guilty of no wanton cruelties. I have accounts on all hands that they treated our clergy, and others who fell into their hands, with great humanity, and according to the usual laws of war.' (Oct. 27.) This was all the more remarkable if, as Bishop Percy said in other letters, the rebels in the North were only miscreants of the lowest kind. 'All the more rational republicans,' he said, 'are disgusted with France for their ill treatment of America,' and 'are separating from the Popish Defenders, who are only bent on mischief.' (June 11, 13, 1798.) Musgrave and Gordon, however, state that a party from Saintfield attacked the house of a farmer named McKee (who had prosecuted some United Irishmen), and that, meeting a fierce resistance, they set fire to the house, and all within perished in the flames. (Musgrave, p. 555; Gordon, p. 160.)

neighbourhood, 'such person's house, so offending, shall be burnt, and the owner thereof hanged.'[1]

No further troubles, however, appeared in Ulster, and a few executions closed this page of the rebellion. Some slight movements which had arisen in the county of Derry, had been easily suppressed by General Knox, and in the other counties the loyal party seemed now completely to predominate. Monroe tried to escape, but was soon arrested, and hanged at Lisburn before his own house, and, it is said, before the eyes of his mother and his wife. He died like a true Christian and a brave man, and impressed all who witnessed his end, with his courage and his manifest sincerity. His head, according to the barbarous fashion of the time, was severed from his body, and fixed on a spike in the market-place of Lisburn. The green and white plume which he wore on his helmet in the battle of Ballinahinch, was afterwards given to Bishop Percy.[2]

We must now return to the theatre of war in Wexford, and follow the fate of the rebel army which had been defeated, but not dissolved or dispersed, in the great battle of New Ross, on June 5. On that evening, the rebels, with a long train of cars bearing their wounded and dead, retreated to their old camp on Carrickbyrne Hill, and it was there that Bagenal Harvey for the first time learnt the horrible tragedy that had taken place at Scullabogue. It is related that the resolution which had supported him through the battle and

[1] Maxwell, pp. 217, 218.

[2] Bishop Percy to his wife, Oct. 27, 1798. The Bishop says that the painter Robinson painted a picture of the battle of Ballinahinch, which contained many portraits of those who were engaged in it. It was raffled for, and won by Lord Hertford. Of the death of Monroe, we have three remarkable accounts: Maxwell, pp. 215, 216; Teeling, p. 260; Musgrave, p. 557. His name—like nearly every name in this part of my history—is spelt by contemporaries in several different ways.

the defeat and the flight, then gave way, and he wrung his hands in agony, bitterly deploring that he had any part in a cause which bore such fruit. He opened a subscription for burying the remains of the murdered prisoners, gave prompt orders to arrest and punish the murderers, and at once wrote a proclamation, which was countersigned by his adjutant-general Breen, and was printed, and widely distributed among all the rebel forces through the county. It laid down stringent rules of discipline under pain of death, and appointed courts-martial to enforce them. 'Any person or persons,' it concluded, 'who shall take upon them to kill or murder any person or persons, burn any house, or commit any plunder, without special written orders from the commander-in-chief, shall suffer death.'[1]

The unfortunate commander was very impotent in the midst of the fierce mob of fanatics who swept him along. A touching letter, which has been preserved, written about this time to an old friend, who asked him to protect some property, paints vividly both his character and his situation.[2] His short command was, however, now over. On the 7th the rebels moved their

[1] Taylor, pp. 70–73; Hay, pp. 159–161; Cloney, pp. 44, 45.

[2] 'Dear Sir,—I received your letter, but what to do for you I know not. I, from my heart, wish to protect all property. I can scarcely protect myself, and indeed my situation is much to be pitied, and distressing to myself. I took my present situation in hopes of doing good, and preventing mischief. My trust is in Providence. I acted always an honest, disinterested part, and had the advice I gave some time since been taken, the present mischief could never have arisen. If I can retire to a private station again, I will, immediately. Mr. Tottenham's refusing to speak to the gentleman I sent into Ross, who was madly shot by the soldiers, was very unfortunate. It has set the people mad with rage, and there is no restraining them. The person I sent in, had private instructions to propose a reconciliation, but God knows where this business will end; but, end how it may, the good men of both parties will be inevitably ruined.' (Taylor, p. 76.)

camp to the hill of Slyeeve-Keelter, which rises about five miles from Ross, on the river formed by the united streams of the Nore and Barrow. They there deposed Bagenal Harvey from the command, and bestowed it on a priest named Philip Roche, who had taken a prominent part in the defeat of Colonel Walpole on June 4. The influence which this victory had given him, his priestly character, his gigantic stature and strength, his loud voice and his boisterous manners, made him much more fitted to command the rebel army, than the feeble and scrupulous Protestant gentleman he superseded, and there is some reason to believe that he had more natural talent for military matters.[1] Harvey went back

[1] See Gordon, p. 123. I must acknowledge myself quite unable to draw the character of this priest. Harwood sums up very well the Catholic version, when he describes him as 'a man abundantly gifted by nature with all the qualities that the post required: of intrepid personal courage, indomitable firmness, a quick and true military eye, immense physical strength and power of enduring privation and fatigue, great tact for managing the rude masses he had to rule, and a generous, humane heart with it all.' (*History of the Rebellion*, p. 185.) Maxwell gives the loyalist version: 'Like Murphy of Boulavogue, Roche was a man of ferocious character and vulgar habits; but, although drunken and illiterate, his huge stature and rough manners gave him a perfect ascendency over the savage mobs which, in rebel parlance, constituted an army. . . . He evinced neither talent nor activity. His chief exploit was an attack upon a gentleman's house, in which he was disgracefully repulsed; while in a new camp he formed within a mile of Ross, the time was passed in drunken revelry, diversified occasionally with a sermon from Father Philip, or the slaughter of some helpless wretch, accused of being an enemy to the people.' (Ibid. pp. 128, 129.) Musgrave describes him as 'an inhuman savage,' but Gordon says that, although 'Philip Roach was in appearance fierce and sanguinary,' several persons who were in danger of being murdered on Vinegar Hill, owed their lives 'to his boisterous interference.' (P. 140.) He admits that Roche was often intoxicated, but adds, 'for a charge of cruelty against him, I can find no foundation. On the contrary, I have heard many instances of his active humanity.' (Appendix, p. 84.) Miles Byrne describes him as 'a clergyman of the most elegant manners, a fine person, tall and

to Wexford, where he assisted Keugh in governing and defending the town, and restraining the populace from outrage. The priests did all they could to sustain the courage of the people, by appeals to their fanaticism and credulity. Some are said to have declared that they were invulnerable, that they could catch the bullets in their hands, that it was only want of faith that caused Catholic rebels to fall by Protestant bullets; and protections and charms, signed and, it is alleged, sold by the new commander, were hung round the necks of the rebel soldiers, to guarantee them from any injury in battle.[1] The weather had been unusually fine, which greatly lightened the hardships of those who were compelled to sleep unsheltered in the open air, and this was constantly appealed to as a clear proof that the benediction of Heaven rested on their cause.

This body of rebels made attempts, which were not wholly unsuccessful, to intercept the navigation of the river of Ross. They captured some small boats; they attacked a gunboat, and killed some of her sailors, but failed to take her, and they succeeded in intercepting a mail, which furnished valuable information about the proceedings and preparations of the Government. On the 10th they moved their camp to Lacken Hill, a mile from Ross, where they remained for some days unmolested and almost inactive. They sent, however, detachments to scour the country for arms and provisions, and gave orders that all males should join their camp. One small party penetrated to the little town of Borris in Carlow, which they partly burnt, but the neighbouring country house of Mr. Kavanagh had been turned

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handsome, humane and brave beyond description.' (*Memoirs*, i. 86.)

[1] Taylor and Musgrave have printed some curious 'protections,' which were taken from the necks of captured or slain rebels.

into a fortress, and was strongly garrisoned by yeomen, and when the rebels attacked it, they were beaten back with heavy loss. Ten of their number, it is said, were left dead, and as many wounded, while only one of the garrison fell.[1] It should be remembered to the credit of Father Roche, that the camp at Lacken Hill, where he held the undivided command, appears to have been absolutely unstained by the murders which had been so numerous at Vinegar Hill.[2]

The reader may remember that another great body of rebels had encamped, after the defeat of Colonel Walpole, in the neighbourhood of Gorey. If they had pressed on at once, after the victory of the 4th, upon Arklow, it must have fallen without resistance, and the road to Dublin would then have been open to them. They wasted, however, precious days, feasting upon their spoil, trying prisoners who were accused of being Orangemen, plundering houses, and burning the town of Carnew; and in the mean time the little garrison, which had at first evacuated Arklow in terror, had returned, and had been powerfully reinforced. It now amounted to 1,500 or 1,600 effective men, chiefly militia and yeomen, but with some artillery. The whole was placed under the skilful direction of General Needham, and every precaution was taken to create or strengthen defences. The rebels at last saw that a great effort must be made to capture the town; and reinforcements having been obtained from Vinegar Hill and from other quarters, they marched from Gorey on the 9th, in a great host which was estimated at 25,000, 30,000, or even 34,000 men, but which, in the opinion of General Needham, did not exceed 19,000. According to the

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[1] Gordon, p. 124. Cloney, who was present at the attack, gives an interesting account of it. (*Personal Narrative*, pp. 48 51.)

[2] Gordon, Appendix, p. 85.

lowest estimate, their numbers appeared overwhelming, but their leaders alone were mounted: they were for the most part wretchedly armed, as scarcely any blacksmith or gunsmith could be found to repair their pikes or guns; their attack was anticipated, and they began it fatigued with a long day's march.

It commenced about four in the afternoon. The rebels advanced from the Coolgreny road and along the sandhills on the shore in two great solid columns, the intervening space being filled with a wild, disorderly crowd, armed with pikes and guns, and wearing green cockades, and green ribbons round their hats. Needham drew out his force in a strong position protected by ditches in front of the barracks. Five cannon supported him, and a heavy fire of grape shot poured continuously into the dense columns of the rebels. These set fire to the cabins that form the suburbs of Arklow, and advanced under shelter of the smoke, and their gunsmen availed themselves of the cover of fences, hedges, and ditches to gall the enemy. It was observed, however, that they usually overloaded their muskets, and fired so high that they did little damage, and although they had three, or, according to another account, four cannon, they had hardly any one capable of managing them. Their shot for the most part plunged harmlessly into the ground, or flew high above the enemy, and some of the rebels wished their captains to give them the canister shot as missiles, declaring that with them they would dash out the brains of the troops. An artillery sergeant, who had been taken prisoner, was compelled to serve at the guns, and it is said that he purposely pointed them so high that they did no damage to the troops.[1]

[1] This statement, which has been made by Gordon and also by the rebel writers, is confirmed by the report of Captain Moore, in the Record Office.

The brunt of the battle was chiefly borne by the Durham Fencibles, an admirably appointed regiment of 360 men, which had only arrived at Arklow that morning. The yeomanry cavalry also more than once charged gallantly, and Captain Thomas Knox Grogan, a brother of the old man who was with the rebels at Wexford, was killed at the head of the Castletown troop. For some time the situation was very critical; at one moment it seemed almost hopeless, and Needham is said to have spoken of retreat, but to have been dissuaded by Colonel Skerrett, who was second in command. It is impossible, indeed, to speak too highly of the endurance and courage of the thin line of defenders who, during three long hours, confronted and baffled a host ten times as numerous as themselves, and it was all the more admirable, as the rebels on their side showed no mean courage. 'Their perseverance,' wrote Needham to General Lake, 'was surprising, and their efforts to possess themselves of the guns on my right were most daring, advancing even to the muzzles, where they fell in great numbers.' 'A heavy fire of grape did as much execution as, from the nature of the ground and the strong fences of which they had possessed themselves, could have been expected. This continued incessantly from 6 o'clock until 8.30, when the enemy desisted from his attack and fled in disorder.' At this time their ammunition was almost exhausted. The shades of night were drawing in, and their favourite commander, Father Michael Murphy, had fallen. He led his men into battle, waving above his head a green flag, emblazoned with a great white cross, and with the inscription 'Death or liberty,' and he was torn to pieces by canister shot within a few yards of the muzzle of a cannon which he was trying to take. He was one of those whom the rebels believed to be invulnerable, and his death cast a sudden chill over

their courage. It was too late for pursuit, and the rebels retired unmolested to Gorey, but their loss had been very great. 'Their bodies,' wrote General Needham, 'have been found in every direction scattered all over the country. The cabins were everywhere filled with them, and many cars loaded with them were carried off after the action. Numbers were also thrown by the enemy into the flames at the lower end of the town. On the whole, I am sure the number of killed must have exceeded a thousand.' On the loyalist side the loss was quite inconsiderable.[1]

The battle of Arklow was the last in which the rebels had any real chance of success, and from this time the rebellion rapidly declined. For some days, however, the alarms of the Government were undiminished. The multitude who had appeared in arms in the county of Wexford, the fanatical courage they displayed, the revolt which had begun in the North, and the complete uncertainty about how far that revolt might extend, or how soon the French might arrive, filled them with an anxiety which appears in all their most confidential letters. Within a few days great

[1] See the report of General Needham to General Lake, June 10, 11, 1798; and also an interesting account of the battle by Captain Moore, in the Record Office. Some particulars, derived from those who were present, are also given in a letter from H. Alexander to Pelham, June 10. (*Pelham MSS.*) See, too, the accounts in Taylor, Musgrave, and Gordon, and in the *Memoirs* of Miles Byrne, who was present in the battle. Byrne maintains that the retreat was wholly unnecessary, and that Arklow might with little difficulty have still been taken. Beresford wrote to Auckland a description of this battle. He says: 'The Ancient Britons who made their escape, assured Needham that the priests who attend the army say mass almost every hour, and work up the people's mind to enthusiasm. There are two or three killed in every battle.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 15.) Father Michael Murphy's body appears to have been horribly mutilated after death by some Ancient Britons. (See Gordon, pp. 212, 213.)

numbers of the principal persons in Ireland, including nearly all the bishops, sent their wives and children to England, and on the 10th Lady Camden and her family crossed the Channel. This last fact was intended to be a profound secret, but it was known to many, and in spite of the most peremptory injunctions, it was speedily disclosed.[1] Pelham was still in England, and on the 11th, Camden wrote to him to press upon the English Ministers, both urgently and officially, the extreme gravity of the situation. 'You may be assured,' he wrote, 'that the complexion this rebellion wears is the most serious it is possible to conceive. Unless Great Britain pours an immense force into Ireland, the country is lost; unless she sends her most able generals, those troops may be sacrificed. The organisation of this treason is universal, and the formidable numbers in which the rebels assemble, oblige all those who have not the good fortune to escape, to join them. The rebels have possessed themselves of Wexford, and of that whole country. They have possessed themselves of Newtown-Ards, and the whole neck of land on that side of the Lough of Strangford is evacuated. The force from Wexford is so great, that it is not thought proper to advance against them. . . . There is no doubt an intention to attempt a rising within the city. . . . The country is lost unless a very large rien-

[1] Bishop Percy mentions that, on the night of Lady Camden's departure, he was walking with the Bishop of Clogher round Merrion Square, when it was almost dark. When they came opposite Lady Frances Beresford's house, they saw that lady standing on her balcony, and could not help hearing what a lady in the street below was calling to her at the full pitch of her voice. It was the whole story of the departure of Lady Camden. The two bishops, without revealing themselves, contrived to see the face of the indiscreet informant, and found that she was Lady Castlereagh. (Bishop Percy to his wife, June 11, 1798.)

forcement of troops is landed.' This opinion 'is universal.'[1]

To Portland he wrote, expressing his astonishment that the English Government should treat this rebellion as one of trivial importance, and that, in spite of his earnest representations, and although the struggle had now lasted for between two and three weeks, 'not a single man had been landed in Ireland.' Mr. Elliot, he said, who had been sent over to lay the situation before the Government, 'will communicate to you the religious frenzy which agitates the rebels in Wexford; that they are headed by their priests, that they halt every half mile to pray, that the deluded multitude are taught to consider themselves as fighting for their religion, that their enthusiasm is most alarming. He will inform your grace how violently agitated the Protestant feeling in Ireland is at this moment, and with how rapid strides the war is becoming one of the most cruel and bloody that ever disgraced or was imposed on a country. He will explain to your grace how impolitic and unwise it would be to refuse the offers of Protestants to enter into yeomanry or other corps, and yet how dangerous even, any encouragement to the Orange spirit is, whilst our army is composed of Catholics, as the militia almost generally is.'[2]

Lord Castlereagh wrote several letters in the same sense. He had not, he said, 'a conception the insurgents would remain together and act in such numbers,'

[1] Camden to Pelham, June 11, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] Camden to Portland, June 11, 1798 (most secret). On June 9, Lees wrote to Auckland: 'We have not yet a single soldier from your side on this.' 'Most strange,' wrote Beresford on the 14th, 'not a man yet arrived in the South or at Dublin. . . . I hear some are at Carrickfergus.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 11, 19.) These passages, and the letters in the text, have an important bearing on the question how far the rebellion was put down by Irish, and how far by English, efforts.

and although the narrow limitation of the Ulster rebellion seemed encouraging, he had secret information that it had been arranged, 'that the rising in Down and Antrim should precede that of the other counties where the disaffection is less general.' In the mean time, the fact that no reinforcements had yet arrived from England afforded 'a moral which the disaffected do not fail to reason from, that with French assistance, the people could have carried the country before a regiment from the other side found its way to our assistance.' This circumstance, he observed, would hereafter have its weight both in France and Ireland. 'It is of importance that the authority of England should decide this contest, as well with a view to British influence in Ireland, as to make it unnecessary for the Government to lend itself too much to a party in this country, highly exasperated by the religious persecution to which the Protestants in Wexford have been exposed.' He sent over to England a specimen of the protections which had been issued by the rebels, attesting the conversion to Catholicism of the person who bore it, and securing him in consequence from molestation, and he pointed out as clearly as Camden, that, in Wexford at least, the United Irish movement had completely lost its original character, and had transformed itself into a religious war. 'The priests lead the rebels to battle; on their march they kneel down and pray, and show the most desperate resolution in their attack. . . . They put such Protestants, as are reported to be Orangemen, to death, saving others upon condition of their embracing the Catholic faith. It is a Jacobinical conspiracy throughout the kingdom, pursuing its object chiefly with Popish instruments.'[1]

[1] Castlereagh to Pelham, June 13; Castlereagh to Elliot, June 16 (*Pelham MSS.*); Castlereagh to Wickham (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 219).

Horrible indeed as were the cruelties that disgraced both sides, they were less deplorable, because less permanent, than the moral effects that were their consequence. Day by day, almost hour by hour, the work of conciliation, which had been carried on in Ireland during the last half-century, was being undone, and in an age when religious animosities were generally fading throughout Europe, they acquired in Ireland a tenfold virulence. No one saw this more clearly than McNally, whose letters to the Government at this time are very instructive, and in some respects very creditable both to his head and to his heart. He strongly urged the falsehood and the folly of describing the rebellion as a Popish plot. It was at its outset more Presbyterian than Popish, and more deistical than either, and its leaders were as far as possible from aiming at any religious ascendency or desiring any religious persecution. It was quite true, as he had told the Government nearly three years before, 'that the priests and country schoolmasters were the principal agitators of French politics, and that among the priests, those expelled from France, as well as the fugitive students from that country, were the most active,' but it was also true 'that this class of demagogues and pedagogues, far from being superstitious Catholics, defied not only the devil, but the Pope and all his works, and were in their private conversation pure deists. Among the Roman Catholics of property and education,' he continued, 'I find strong principles, not only of aristocracy, but monarchy. These, however, I apprehend, are but a small body. . . . Among the middling orders the Pope is held in contempt. His recent misfortunes are laughed at, and his ancient influence, through all its delegations, is nearly gone.'[1] The re-

[1] J. W., June 6, 1798. In another letter he says: 'The secular clergy of Ireland, particularly those of Dublin, have not been the instigators of rebellion; the regulars it is who lighted the

bellion was clearly taking a form which the leaders had never anticipated or desired, and 'of this,' said McNally, 'I am well convinced, that numbers of those who were zealous as United Irishmen of the first society, are shocked at the present appearance of the country, and wish sincerely for peace. Many who have wished to carry the question of reform and emancipation, even by an armed body, such as the volunteers were, shudder at the enormities to be expected from an armed banditti.'[1]

'The principle,' he wrote in another letter, 'which forms the character of republicanism, I perceive, changes daily to that of religion. The object of Government, it is said by the organised and their adherents, is Protestant ascendency, and the destruction of Catholics and Dissenters. This insinuation comes most effectually from the clergy, and has a powerful influence on the lower classes. I do not confine my observation to the Catholic clergy, or to the Catholic bigots.' Infinite harm had been done by the acts and words of indiscreet Protestants. One officer is reported to have said, when a crowd of Catholics came to enlist in the yeomanry, 'These fellows are Papists, and if we don't disarm them, they will cut our throats;' and such sayings, whether true or false, were sedulously repeated through the whole country. A report had been spread, 'that Government have determined not only on an union with England, but on reviving all the penal laws against the Papists. From these and other causes, among which Orange emblems are not the weakest, old prejudices, old rancours, and old antipathies are reviving. Orange

brand, and among those the younger were the most active, from their attachment to French politics. This class of men are the political preceptors of country schoolmasters—a class of men who, the judges well know, have been the most successful agitators.' (J. W., June 26, 1798.)

[1] J. W., June 13, 1798.

emblems, while they create animosities, strengthen the hopes of the United party. So few appear with them, that they cannot inspire fear, but they create hatred.' Another report was, that a priest named Bush had been cruelly whipped, and that he exclaimed under the torture, 'My Saviour suffered more for me than I have suffered.' The story, McNally said, may have been false, but it was industriously spread for the purpose of raising a spirit of retaliation. On the other hand, it was not true, as the official bulletin asserted, that it was the rebels who had set fire to Kildare. McNally had very recently seen a respectable gentleman, who had been present when that little town was in a blaze. Two-thirds of its houses had been burnt, and the conflagration was due to the rank and file of the Dublin Militia, who were determined to avenge the murder of one of their officers.[1]

The time, McNally clearly saw and repeatedly urged, had come when the most terrible and enduring calamities could only be averted by a speedy clemency. There were bitter complaints of the whippings without trial. The soldiers were driving the people to the rebels. The severities were producing sullen, silent rancour. Executions were looked upon as merely murders; and when the procession for an execution commenced, all those within doors to whose knowledge it came, betook themselves to their prayers. On the other hand, it was now generally felt that any government is better than anarchy, and the great mass of industrious men only desired a rapid termination of the contest. 'I cannot presume to advise,' he writes; 'but take my opinion candidly. I do sincerely believe that all classes are heartily tired and terrified, and would willingly go almost any length

[1] J. W., June 12, 13, and also some undated letters, which were evidently written about the same time.

for peace.' 'I do believe that zeal to the cause is now working in very few, except desperate adventurers and the proscribed; and I would venture to say, that a certainty of pardon would melt down the combination, strong as it appears.'[1]

It is easy, indeed, to understand the savage hatred that was arising. In times of violence the violent must rule, and events assume a very different shape from that in which they appear to unimaginative historians in a peaceful age. When men are engaged in the throes of a deadly struggle; when dangers, horrible, unknown, and unmeasured, encompass them at every step; when the probability not only of ruin, but of massacre, is constantly before their eyes; when every day brings its ghastly tales of torture, murder, and plunder, it is idle to look for the judgments and the feelings of philanthropists or philosophers. The tolerant, the large-minded, the liberal, the men who can discriminate between different degrees or classes of guilt, and weigh in a just balance opposing crimes, then disappear from the scene. A feverish atmosphere of mingled passion and panic is created, which at once magnifies, obscures, and distorts, and the strongest passions are most valued, for they bring most men into the field, and make them most indifferent to danger and to death. The Catholic rebellion only became really formidable when the priests touched the one chord to which their people could heartily respond, and turned it into a religious war, and a scarcely less fierce fanaticism and thirst for vengeance had arisen to repress it.

A few lines from one of the letters of Alexander, will show the point of view of men who, without themselves sharing this fanaticism, were quite ready to make

[1] I take these sentences from a number of letters, which are chiefly undated.

use of it, and who advocated a policy directly opposite to that of McNally. 'Affections,' he says, 'in Ireland decide upon everything. To calculate on our judgments is nonsense.' To the zeal, activity, and courage of the yeomanry, Dublin is mainly indebted for its tranquillity, and the whole country for its salvation. 'Nothing can equal their loyalty but their impatience,' and they are not a little offended by the reserve of the Government. It is true that 'the thorough knowledge every yeoman and loyal man has that (were he mean enough to meditate it) no retraction of conduct could save him,' secures Government a most decided, though sometimes a 'querulous support.' But it will not be possible for the Government much longer to adopt a restraining or moderating policy. 'All the Protestants are gradually arming,' and 'the Orangemen would rise if encouraged by the Government, and make a crusade if required.' 'Unless we trust, we cannot exist; and the man who first trusts the lower Irish, bespeaks their fidelity. . . . If Government does not use one of the two great bodies that exist in the State, they will in a short time combine against it.' The French Government might have survived the revolutionary storm if it had not by a dubious, compromising, and conceding policy placed itself outside all the parties and enthusiasms of the State. In Ireland, in the opinion of Alexander, it is the Whig Club, the policy of Grattan, and the concessions of the Government that have done the mischief, and that mischief can only be arrested by throwing away the scabbard and adopting the most uncompromising policy. 'We have heard and listened to the serpent hissing in Ireland, until we have been severely stung. Lords O'Neil and Mountjoy, Commoners McManus, who presided at the Dungannon meeting, have been the first victims of the rebels' fury, and they were the great advocates of the conceding system. In pri-

vate life the most obnoxious men are safe, and the prudent men, who conceived they stood well with both parties, find moderatisme (*sic*) as bad a trade as it was in France.'[1]

Higgins in one of his letters notices another element, which contributed much to the horror and the desperation of the struggle. It was the distress which inevitably followed from the complete paralysis of industry and credit. Weavers no longer gave employment to their workmen. English manufacturers would send over no goods except for immediate payment. Trade in all its branches was stagnant. No one ventured to embark on any enterprise stretching into the unknown future. 'As to bank-note currency,' he wrote, 'I do most solemnly assure you, that the shopkeepers and dealers laugh at any person, even buying an article, and asking change of a guinea note. These circumstances, distressing to the poor, with the exorbitant price of provisions, will occasion tradesmen out of employment to engage, for bread, in any dangerous enterprise.' Higgins pressed this fact upon the Government, as deserving their most earnest attention, and he reminded them that Chesterfield, who steered Ireland so wisely and so successfully during the Scotch troubles of 1745, had then made it one of his first objects to provide employment for the people, by undertaking great works of planting and cultivation in Phœnix Park.[2]

The clouds, however, were now at length clearing away. In a few days it became evident, that in Down and Antrim the insurrection was really suppressed, and that the remainder of Ulster was not disposed to follow

[1] Henry Alexander to Pelham, June 10, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] F. H., June 13, 1798. See, too, *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 15. Sheridan even attributed the rebellion mainly to want of employment and want of bread. (*Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1502.)

their example, and at the same time the long-expected reinforcements from England at last arrived. On the 16th it was announced that five English regiments had landed at Waterford,[1] and immediately after, many English militia regiments volunteered to serve in Ireland. The King had no power to accept their offer without a special Act of Parliament, but such an Act was speedily carried, in spite of the violent opposition and protest of the English Whig Opposition,[2] while the Irish Parliament voted 500,000*l.* for their maintenance in Ireland.[3] About 12,000 of the English militia came over, and the first regiments arrived before the end of June.[4] The rebellion, it is true, was then virtually over, but the presence of this great force did much to guard against its revival and against the dangers of invasion. Among other noblemen, the former viceroy, the Marquis of Buckingham, now came to Ireland at the head of a regiment of militia.

Gordon, who, from his long residence in the neighbourhood of Gorey, is by far the most competent, as he is also the most candid, historian of the proceedings of the rebels in that part of the county of Wexford, observes that there were fewer crimes committed there than in the southern parts of the county, and that they were certainly not unprovoked. The burning of houses by the yeomanry, the free quarters, the pitched caps, the trials by court-martial, and the shooting of prisoners without trial, went far to explain them. At the same time he observes that 'the war from the beginning, in direct violation of the oath of the United Irishmen, had taken a religious turn, as every civil war in the South or West of Ireland must be expected to take, by any

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[1] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 16.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1493–1512.

[3] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 28, 29.

[4] See Musgrave, p. 559.

man well acquainted with the prejudices of the inhabitants. The terms Protestant and Orangeman were almost synonymous with the mass of the insurgents, and the Protestants whom they meant to favour were generally baptised into the Romish Church.'[1]

Gordon doubted much whether, in the event of a complete success of the rebellion, any large number of Protestants in Wexford would have been suffered to live, but he acknowledged that the actual murders in this part of the county were not numerous, and that 'many individuals had evinced much humanity in their endeavours to mitigate the fury of their associates.' A few houses in Gorey, and two country houses in its immediate neighbourhood, were burnt by the rebels, and they confined many prisoners in the market-house. Some persons, who were especially obnoxious to them, were piked or shot. One or two were tortured with the pitched cap, but the lives of the great majority of the prisoners were spared, and although they lived in constant fear of death, it is not certain that they were seriously ill treated. It appears, too, that loyalist families who had been unable to escape, still continued to live in the neighbourhood, for the most part unmolested, except that they were obliged to provide food for the rebels.[2]

A few days after the defeat at Arklow, the rebels evacuated Gorey and the whole of the neighbouring country. Many of them simply deserted from the

[1] Gordon, pp. 133, 134. 'So inveterately rooted,' he elsewhere says, 'are the prejudices of religious antipathy in the minds of the lower classes of Irish Romanists, that in any civil war, however originating from causes unconnected with religion, not all the efforts of their gentry, or even priests, to the contrary, could (if I am not exceedingly mistaken) restrain them from converting it into a religious quarrel.' (P. 285.)

[2] Compare Gordon, pp. 133–137, with Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 147–152.

ranks, and those who remained embodied, divided into two parties. The smaller one, carrying with them the prisoners, went to Wexford, while the main body penetrated into the county of Wicklow, and on June 17 attacked and burnt to the ground the little town of Tinnehely. It contained an active Protestant population, who had done good service in keeping their county in order, and it appears now to have been the scene of great atrocities. Many houses in its neighbourhood were burnt. 'Many persons,' writes Gordon, 'were put to death with pikes, under the charge of being Orangemen; and many more would have suffered, if they had not been spared at the humane intercession of a Romanist lady, a Mrs. Maher, in that neighbourhood.' The rebels placed a Catholic Wicklow gentleman, named Garret Byrne, at their head, and they seem to have been conducted with some ability. The yeomanry of the district, who, to the number of about five hundred men, had been concentrated at Hacketstown, found it hopeless to attack them; but General Dundas, with a large body of troops and a train of artillery, arrived at Tinnehely on the 18th, and it was thought that he could have easily crushed the rebels. They had retired, however, to a strong position on Kilcaven Hill, about two miles from Carnew; and although Dundas was speedily strengthened by a junction with General Loftus, he totally failed to surround or intercept them. On the 20th there was a cannonade between the two armies, which did little execution on either side; the English general then withdrew to Carnew, and the same night Byrne's army directed its march, unmolested, to Vinegar Hill.[1]

[1] Gordon, pp. 133–138. The reader should, however, compare this account with that (differing in some details) given by Miles Byrne, who took part in this campaign. (Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 148–163.) Byrne naturally minimises the number of murders by

On the 19th the rebel force, which, under the command of Father Philip Roche, still occupied a height near New Ross, was surprised and compelled to retreat. One portion of it took the line to Vinegar Hill. The other and larger portion, after some fighting, in which the rebels showed more than usual skill, made its way to the Three Rocks, near Wexford.[1] The whole force of the rebellion in Wexford was thus concentrated in two centres, and the army at the disposal of General Lake was now amply sufficient to crush it. A great combined movement was speedily devised by Lake for surrounding Vinegar Hill. The failure of two brigades to arrive in time, deranged the plan of completely cutting off the retreat of the rebels; but on June 21, Vinegar Hill was stormed from several sides, by an army which was estimated by the rebels at 20,000 men, but which probably amounted to 13,000 or 14,000, and was supported by a powerful body of artillery. Against such a force, conducted by skilful generals, the ill-armed, ill-led, disorganised, and dispirited rebels had little chance. The chief brunt of the action was borne by the troops under Generals Johnson and Dundas. For an hour and a half the rebels maintained their position with great intrepidity, but then, seeing that they were on the point of being surrounded, they broke, and fled in wild confusion to Wexford, leaving the camp, which

the rebels. He says that a clerical magistrate named Owens, who had been conspicuous in putting pitched caps on rebels, was among the prisoners at Gorey, and was not further punished than by a pitched cap; and he palliates the misdeeds of the party, by accusing the yeomen of murdering the wounded who were left on the field. He says nothing about the burning of Tinnehely, and represents rather more fighting as having taken place than appears from Gordon's narrative. He dishonestly calls Gordon 'the Orange historian.'

[1] Cloney gives a full account of the retreat, in which he took part. (*Personal Narrative*, pp. 54–60.) Compare 'The Journal of a Field Officer,' in Maxwell, p. 141, and Hay, pp. 200, 201.

had been stained with so much Protestant blood, in the hands of the troops. Thirteen small cannon were taken there, but owing to the inexperience of the gunners, and the great deficiency of ammunition, they had been of little use. The loss of the King's troops in killed and wounded, appears to have been less than a hundred; while that of the rebels was probably five or six times as great.[1]

Enniscorthy was at the same time taken, after some fighting in the streets. The troops, as usual, gave no quarter, and the historians in sympathy with the rebellion declare that the massacre extended to the wounded, to many who were only suspected of disaffection, and even to some loyalists who had been prisoners of the rebels. A Hessian regiment which had lately come over, was especially noticed for its indiscriminate ferocity. Many houses were set on fire, and among others one which was employed by the rebels as their hospital. It was consumed, and all who were in it perished. The number of the victims was at least fourteen, and one writer places it as high as seventy. The rebel historians describe this act as not less deliberate than the burning of the barn of Scullabogue. Gordon learnt, on what appeared to him good authority, 'that the burning was accidental; the bedclothes being set on fire by the wadding of the soldiers' guns, who were shooting the patients in their beds.'[2]

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[1] Compare the accounts of Musgrave, Gordon, Hay, and Byrne (who took part in the battle). Musgrave gives Lake's despatches in his Appendix.

[2] Gordon, p. 145; Hay, p. 228; Cloney, p. 47. Taylor, who is a strongly loyal historian, mentions that the loyalist prisoners were, by mistake, slaughtered by the soldiers. (P. 119.) General Lake, in reporting the victory at Vinegar Hill, says: 'The troops behaved excessively well in action, but their determination to destroy every one they think a rebel is beyond description, and wants much correction.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 223.)

Nothing now remained but the capture of Wexford. This town, as we have seen, had been left in the hands of a Protestant gentleman named Keugh, who was one of the most conspicuous of a small group of brave and honourable men, who, under circumstances of extreme difficulty and danger, tried to give the rebellion a character of humanity, and to maintain it on the lines of the United Irishmen. He was powerfully supported by Edward Roche, who was a brother of Father Philip Roche, and himself a well-to-do farmer of the county. This man had been sergeant in a yeomanry regiment, and had deserted to the rebels, with most of the Catholics in his troop, at the beginning of the rebellion. He was soon after elected 'a general officer of the United army of the county of Wexford;'[1] and he issued, on June 7, a very remarkable proclamation to the rebels at Wexford. After congratulating his followers on the success that had so far attended their arms, and dilating on the supreme importance of maintaining a strict discipline, he proceeded: 'In the moment of triumph, my countrymen, let not your victories be tarnished with any wanton act of cruelty; many of those unfortunate men now in prison are not your enemies from principle; most of them, compelled by necessity, were obliged to oppose you. Neither let a difference in religious sentiments cause a difference among the people. Recur to the debates in the Irish House of Lords on February 19 last; you will there see a patriotic and enlightened Protestant bishop [Down], and many of the lay lords, with manly eloquence pleading for Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, in opposition to the haughty arguments of the Lord Chancellor, and the powerful opposition of his fellow-courtiers. To promote

[1] See, for many particulars about Edward Roche, Crofton Croker's notes to Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 65–69.

a union of brotherhood and affection among our countrymen of all religious persuasions, has been our principal object. We have sworn in the most solemn manner; have associated for this laudable purpose, and no power on earth shall shake our resolution. To my Protestant soldiers I feel much indebted for their gallant behaviour in the field, where they exhibited signal proofs of bravery in the cause.'[1]

A number of respectable inhabitants of Wexford, among whom the Catholic priests deserve a prominent place,[2] rallied round Keugh and Roche, and, at the constant risk of their own lives, preserved Wexford for some weeks from the horrors of Vinegar Hill and Scullabogue. The difficulty of their task was enormous, for they had to deal with fierce, fanatical, and sometimes drunken mobs, led by men who had sprung from the very dregs of the people, and maddened by accounts of military excesses, which were almost daily brought into the town by the many fugitives who sought refuge

[1] Hay, pp. 162, 163.

[2] Musgrave has done the utmost in his power to blacken the Catholic priests in Wexford; but nothing can be stronger than the testimony in their favour, of Jackson, who was an Englishman, a Protestant, and a loyalist, and who was prisoner in Wexford during the whole siege. He says: 'The conduct of the Roman Catholic clergy of Wexford cannot be too much commended. Dr. Caulfield, the titular Bishop of Leighlin and Ferns, Father Curran, Father Broe, and, indeed, the whole of the priests and friars of that town, on all occasions used their interest and exerted their abilities in the cause of humanity. Every Sunday, after mass, they addressed their audience, and implored them in the most earnest manner not to ill treat their prisoners, and not to have upon their consciences the reflection of having shed innocent blood.' (Jackson, *Narrative*, p. 54.) The same writer says: 'From what I saw while I was in confinement, or could learn, I think myself bound to say that, in my opinion, such of the rebel chiefs as had been in respectable situations, detested the system of murder and robbery, which was as universally adopted by the upstart officers and unruly mob, over whom they had little more than a nominal command. (P. 45.)

within it. It was necessary to give some satisfaction to the more violent party, and a regular tribunal was formed to try those who had committed crimes against the people. I have already spoken of the manner in which two informers named Murphy were put to death, and on June 6, the day after the battle of New Ross, a party of rebels came to Wexford from Enniscorthy, probably by order of the revolutionary tribunal on Vinegar Hill, and after some resistance carried ten prisoners from that town, who were in Wexford gaol, back to Enniscorthy, and executed them there.[1] About ten days later another party from the same town, having, it is said, overpowered the guard at Wexford gaol, carried four more prisoners to Vinegar Hill, where they were put to death.[2] A proclamation was issued at Wexford, on June 9, declaring, in the name 'of the people of the county of Wexford,' that four magistrates, who were mentioned by name, had committed 'the most horrid acts of cruelty, violence, and oppression,' and calling on all Irishmen to make every exertion to lodge them in Wexford gaol, for trial 'before the tribunal of the people.'[3]

Such measures, however, were far from satisfying the Wexford mob, and the rebel leaders themselves, and especially those who were Protestants, were in constant, daily danger. On one occasion especially, Keugh and the committee who acted with him in managing the town, were attacked by a mob, and Keugh was accused of being a traitor, in league with the Orangemen; but his eloquence and presence of mind, the ascendency of a strong character, and the support of a few attached friends, enabled him to surmount the opposition.[4] Crowds of Protestants, however, who had

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 149, 150; Jackson, pp. 24, 25.

[2] Hay, p. 199.

[3] Jackson, p. 50.

[4] Gordon, pp. 147, 148. Musgrave, pp. 464-466. Musgrave

already received protections from the priests, now came to the Catholic chapels with their children to be baptised, believing that this was their one chance of safety. It is but justice to add, that some priests objected strongly to these forced and manifestly insincere conversions, and only consented to accept them at the urgent entreaty of men who believed that their lives were at stake. Even Bagenal Harvey, and the other Protestant leaders, though they did not abjure Protestantism, thought it advisable to clear themselves from suspicion of Orangism, by attending the Catholic chapel.[1] At the same time, some Protestants in Wexford appear to have remained at large and unmolested, during the whole occupation, and among them was the Protestant rector, who was much beloved on account of his kindness to the poor.[2]

The Protestants, however, who had excited suspicion or unpopularity, were soon confined under a strong guard, which was the only means of securing their lives. The gaol, the market-house, one of the barracks, and one or two ships in the harbour, were filled with them, and about 260 male Protestants were in custody.[3] The prisoners confined in one of the ships appear to have

says: 'I have heard, from the concurrent testimony of different persons who resided at Wexford at this time, that nothing but the humane and active interference of Generals Keugh and Harvey prevented that indiscriminate slaughter of Protestants there, which took place in many other parts of the country, particularly at Vinegar Hill; but when they lost their authority, the bloody work began. . . . Some of the gentlemen confined in the prison ship, assured me that the rebel guards frequently inveighed against Keugh, and vowed vengeance against him because he would not indulge the people—that is, because he did his utmost to restrain their desire for carnage.' (Pp. 465, 466.)

[1] Jackson, p. 53.

[2] Gordon, p. 147; Hay, pp. 142–145. I have mentioned the desire of the more respectable rebel leaders that the Protestant service should continue; but Barrington pretends that the rector was compelled to conform to Catholicism.

[3] Taylor, p. 81; Hay, p. 126.

been treated with much harshness by the captain, but on their complaint they were brought back to land, and William Kearney and Patrick Furlong, who were placed at the head of the gaol, discharged their task with distinguished humanity and courage. Protestant women were not imprisoned, and although they endured terrible agonies of anxiety,[1] they were treated on the whole with great forbearance, and appear to have suffered no outrage. 'Several persons,' McNally wrote to the Government on June 13, 'who have escaped from Wexford, say that the insurgents there have treated the women with great respect, that sentinels have been placed on the houses where Mrs. Ogle and other ladies reside, to protect them from insult, and that nothing like religious persecution has taken place.'[2]

The fact that Lord Kingsborough was among the prisoners, added not a little to the embarrassment of Keugh. Apart from considerations of humanity, it was a matter of manifest policy to preserve a hostage of such importance; but as Lord Kingsborough had commanded the North Cork Militia, he was peculiarly obnoxious to the people. Again and again mobs assembled round the house where he was confined, demanding his execution; but by the courageous interposition of the principal inhabitants, and especially of the Catholic bishop, Dr. Caulfield, he was preserved unscathed. The leader of the more violent party appears to have been a man named Thomas Dixon, who was the captain and part proprietor of a trading vessel in the bay, and who had obtained some rank in the rebel force. He seems to have been indefatigable in inciting

[1] I have already quoted the very interesting diary of Mrs. Adams, published in Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland*. A short fragment of the diary of another lady, who was in the town, is given by Musgrave.

[2] J. W., June 13, 1798.

the people to murder, and his wife powerfully seconded him. A pitched cap, which was said to have been found in the barracks of the North Cork Militia, was carried on a pike through the streets, and a warrant was shown authorising a sergeant of the regiment to found an Orange lodge.[1] Nearly every Protestant was suspected of being an Orangeman, and the belief that Orangemen had sworn to exterminate the Catholics was almost universal.

The Orange Society took great pains to repudiate this calumny. It had been introduced into Dublin in 1797, and soon after, by order of the different lodges, an address, signed by the recognised leaders of the society, was drawn up and widely published, in which the members declared their perfect loyalty and their readiness to serve the Crown against any enemy, but, at the same time, disclaimed all persecuting intentions. 'We solemnly assure you,' they said, 'in the presence of Almighty God, that the idea of injuring anyone on account of his religious opinion, never entered our hearts. We regard every loyal subject as a friend, be his religion what it may: we have no enemy but the enemies of our country.'[2] Many respectable Catholics had signed an address, declaring their loyalty and detestation of the rebellion, and this address at once elicited a response from one of the largest Orange associations in Ulster. 'We have with the greatest pleasure,' they said, 'seen declarations of loyalty from many congregations of our Roman Catholic brethren, in the sincerity of which we declare our firm confidence, and assure them, in the face of the whole world, and of the Being we both worship, though under different re-

[1] Hay, pp. 175, 176.

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 19, 1798. This address appears to have been drawn up in February. See Cupple's *Principles of the Orange Association* (1799).

ligious forms, that, however the common enemies of all loyal men may misrepresent the Orangemen, we consider every loyal subject as our brother and our friend, let his religious profession be what it may. We associate to suppress rebellion and treason, not any mode of worship. We have no enmity but to the enemies of our country.'[1]

Such declarations could hardly penetrate to the great masses of the ignorant rebels, and they drank in readily the charges against the Orangemen, which were sedulously spread, and which were strengthened by the many acts of lawless violence that were perpetrated by the yeomen. Bishop Caulfield, afterwards describing this period to Archbishop Troy, stated that, during the first fortnight of the rebel rule of Wexford, the priests were usually able to secure the safety of the Protestants, but that after this 'the evil, sanguinary spirit broke loose, and no protection availed. . . . It soon became treason to plead for protection, for they were all Orangemen, and would destroy us all.' In spite of the peculiar sanctity which in Ireland has always attached to a Catholic bishop, Dr. Caulfield declares that, when he attempted to prevent murder, his own life was in imminent danger. He was told that his house would be pulled down or burnt, and his head knocked off. Three or four priests supported him with great courage and devotion, but the rest appear to have been completely scared and cowed by the fierce elements around them. They 'dared not show themselves or speak, for fear of pikes,' and they more than once fled in terror to a vessel in the harbour.[2]

A curious incident occurred, which paints vividly the terror and the credulity that prevailed. There was

[1] *Faulkner's Journal*, June 16, 1798.
[2] Plowden, ii. 750, 751.

a certain Colonel Le Hunte, who, though a Protestant, had lived for some time, apparently without disturbance, in a house in Wexford, but his country house, which lay within a few miles of the town, was searched by a party under the leadership of Dixon. It was found that the drawing-room contained some furniture of an orange colour, and among other articles two fire-screens, decorated with orange ribbons and ornamented with various mythological figures, such as Hope with her anchor, Minerva with her spear, blindfolded Justice, Vulcan and the Cyclops, Ganymede and the eagle. Dixon at once told the people that he had found the meeting place and the insignia of the Orangemen, and that these mysterious figures represented different forms of torture, by which it was intended to put Catholic men, women, and children to death. He carried the screens through the streets of Wexford, and speedily raised an ungovernable mob. They attacked the house where Colonel Le Hunte was staying, and would have murdered him in a few moments, if two Catholic gentlemen had not, at the imminent risk of their lives, interfered, pushed back the pikes which were directed against them, and, by persuading the people that so grave a case demanded a regular trial, succeeded in placing him in the security of the prison. The mob were, however, so furious at being denied immediate vengeance, that the lives of the whole town committee were for some time in the utmost danger.[1]

All this portended that the rebel rule in Wexford would not end without a great catastrophe. English ships of war were seen hovering around the town, and soon some gunboats blocked the harbour, preventing

[1] Hay, pp. 197, 198; Musgrave, pp. 470, 471; Gordon, pp. 148, 149; Plowden, ii. 741, 742; Jackson's *Personal Narrative*, pp. 44–46.

all escape by sea, while from the land side, fugitives poured daily in, bringing gloomy tidings of the failure of the rebellion, of the burning of their houses, and of the fury of the troops. Father Philip Roche, with the greater part of the force with which he had retreated from Lacken Hill, near New Ross, was now at the old rebel encampment on the Three Rocks, outside Wexford, and he came alone into Wexford to seek for support to attack General Moore, who was marching from the neighbourhood of New Ross, to join in the attack against Vinegar Hill. Early on the morning of the 20th, the drum beat in Wexford, and the whole armed population, except a few guards, were ordered to march to the camp at Three Rocks,[1] and that afternoon they attacked Moore's troops at a place called Goffsbridge, or Foulkes Mill, near the church of Horetown. The rebels are said to have been skilfully led, and they fought with great obstinacy for about four hours, when they were beaten back and retired to the Three Rocks.[2]

It was on that afternoon, when the chiefs and the bulk of the armed population were absent from the town, that the massacre of Wexford Bridge took place. Dixon, disobeying the orders of his superiors, refused to leave Wexford with the other captains, and he had a great mob who were devoted to him. They were not, it appears, inhabitants of the town, but countrymen from the neighbourhood. On the preceding night, he had brought into the town seventy men from the northern side of the Slaney, and he had himself gone through the district of Shilmalier, which was thronged with fugitives from the country about Gorey, calling

[1] Hay, pp. 204–207.

[2] Ibid. pp. 226, 227. See, too, Maxwell. pp, 141, 142, and Sir John Moore's despatches, describing the battle, in Musgrave, Appendix, pp. 156, 157.

them to come to Wexford to defend the deserted town.[1] He distributed much whisky among his followers, and, at the head of a large crowd, he took possession of the gaol and market-house, and brought out the prisoners to be murdered, in batches of ten, fifteen, and twenty. A few were shot in the gaol and in the market-place, but by far the greater number were hurried to the bridge. A black flag bearing the symbol of the Redemption, and with the letters M.W.S., was carried before them.[2] Dixon and his wife, both on horseback, presided, and a vast crowd, containing, it is said, more women than men, accompanied the prisoners, most of them shouting with savage delight, though some dropped on their knees and prayed. The prisoners were placed in rows of eighteen or twenty, and the pikemen pierced them one by one, lifted them writhing into the

[1] This is the statement of Hay (pp. 207–213), and it is confirmed by better authority. Bishop Caulfield, in a private letter to Archbishop Troy, says: 'I could not find that there were more than two or three of this town engaged in the massacres, for the townsmen had been that morning ordered out to camp near Enniscorthy, and a horde of miscreants, like so many bloodhounds, rushed in from the country, and swore they would burn the town if the prisoners were not given up to them.' (Plowden, ii. 751.) Lord Kingsborough also, as we shall see, distinctly exculpated the townsmen from complicity in the massacre.

[2] Musgrave (p. 485) and Taylor (p. 121) say that these letters were believed to mean 'murder without sin,' an interpretation which appears to me incredible. If the rebels wished to convey this sentiment, they could have done so much more clearly: they would not have used the invidious term 'murder;' and it is exceedingly improbable that a banner intended to convey such a meaning, should have been prepared beforehand. Hay says that this black flag had been carried by one particular corps through the whole rebellion, and a member of that corps told Crofton Croker that the letters signified only, 'Marksmen, Wexford, Shilmalier.' Shilmalier was the barony of Wexford, most famous for its marksmen, and also, as we have seen, that from which most of the actors in this tragedy seem to have come. (See a note to Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 89, 90.)

air, held them up for a few moments before the yelling multitude, and then flung their bodies into the river. One man sprang over the battlement, and was shot in the water. Ninety-seven prisoners are said to have been murdered, and the tragedy was prolonged for more than three hours. So much blood covered the bridge, that it is related that, when Dixon and his wife endeavoured to ride over it, their frightened horses refused to proceed, and they were obliged to dismount, Mrs. Dixon holding up her riding habit lest it should be reddened in the stream.

One priest courageously attempted to stop the murders. Whether the many others who were present in Wexford were paralysed by fear, or ignorant of what was taking place, or conscious that they would be utterly impotent before a furious drunken mob, will never be known.[1] Happily the tragedy was not fully consummated. Lord Kingsborough, who was guarded in a private house, was not molested. Some prisoners in the gaol succeeded in concealing themselves,[2] and the great majority had not been brought out from their different places of confinement, when Edward Roche, followed shortly after by Dick Munk, the shoeblack captain, galloped into the town, and crying out that Vinegar Hill was invested, and that every man was

[1] Taylor and Musgrave have accused Bishop Caulfield of having refused, when asked, to interfere to prevent the massacre; but the bishop published a pamphlet in which he most solemnly denied the charge, and declared that, as he was in his house at some considerable distance from the scene, he knew nothing of what was passing. (*Reply of the Rev. Dr. Caulfield, and of the R.C. Clergy of Wexford, to the Misrepresentations of Sir R. Musgrave*: 1801.) The courageous interposition of Father Curran is undoubted; but there is a difference of statement about how far it was effectual. Caulfield, in his letter to Archbishop Troy, gives a vivid picture of the terror of the priests. (See Plowden, ii. 749–751, 761.)

[2] Col. Le Hunte was one of these.

needed to repel the troops, succeeded in drawing away the crowd, and putting an end to the massacre. A few prisoners, half dead with fear, who were still on the bridge, were taken back to the gaol.[1]

The end was now very nearly come. Three armies were on the march to Wexford, and it was plainly indefensible. In the night of the 20th, Keugh and the principal inhabitants took counsel together, and they agreed that the only chance for safety was to endeavour to obtain terms, and that the only means of accomplishing this was by the help of Lord Kingsborough. They desired to save their own lives, to prevent the town from being given up to the mercy of an infuriated soldiery, and also to avert a general massacre of the remaining prisoners, and perhaps of the whole Protestant population, which would probably take place

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[1] I have given the best account I can of this massacre; but the reader who will compare the original authorities, will find numerous inconsistencies and discrepancies among them. Jackson, who wrote his *Personal Narrative*, was actually kneeling on the bridge, waiting his turn to be piked, when the rescue came. Taylor was one of the forty-eight prisoners who were confined in the market-place, and one of nineteen who were saved. (*Hist. of the Rebellion*, p. 124.) Musgrave, who relates the story with his usual research, and his usual violent and evident partisanship, gives an account which, he says, he received from eye-witnesses, who were in a house close to the bridge. (Pp. 485–487.) Hay—who is quite as violent a partisan on one side as Musgrave on the other—was in the town, and (according to his own account) exerted himself greatly to prevent the massacre. His long and confused story differs in several respects from the others, and he pretends (p. 221) that only thirty-six persons were murdered. This is inconsistent with the statements of the other writers, and the long period during which the tragedy was going on makes it very improbable. Gordon gives a list of 'some of the persons massacred on the bridge of Wexford,' which comprises fifty-three names. (Appendix, pp. 62, 63.) Bishop Caulfield, in a letter evidently not meant for publication, says the rebels called the prisoners out 'by dozens' to be executed. (Plowden, ii. 750.)

before the arrival of the troops, if the rebels were driven to absolute desperation. Bishop Caulfield and the other leading priests took an active part in these discussions, and Lord Kingsborough fully entered into their views. Lord Kingsborough at first proposed that he should himself go to meet the troops, but this plan was rejected, and early on the morning of the 21st, Keugh formally placed the government of Wexford in his hands, with the assent of the chief inhabitants of the town. Lord Kingsborough on his side agreed, as far as lay in his power, that 'they should all be protected in person and property, murderers excepted, and those who had instigated others to commit murder; hoping that these terms might be ratified, as he had pledged his honour in the most solemn manner to have these terms fulfilled, on the town being surrendered to him, the Wexford men not being concerned in the massacre which was perpetrated by country people in their absence.'[1] Dr. Jacob, who had been the mayor of the town previous to the insurrection, was at the same time invited to resume his functions. Captain McManus, a liberated prisoner, accompanied by Hay, was at once sent to meet General Moore with the offer of surrender signed by Keugh, and 'by order of the inhabitants of the town of Wexford.' It stated that the envoys were 'appointed by the inhabitants of all religious persuasions, to inform the officer commanding the King's troops, that they were ready to deliver up the town of Wexford without opposition, lay down their

[1] See an interesting letter written in 1799 by Captain Bourke, an officer of the North Cork Militia (who had been captured with Lord Kingsborough), describing the negotiation, and authenticated by Lord Kingsborough (then Lord Kingston) himself. (Hay's *Hist.*, Appendix, pp. xxviii-xxx.) It appears, from this letter, that Keugh was at first reluctant to surrender the government of Wexford, and that this step was taken on the motion of Hay.

arms, and return to their allegiance, provided their persons and property were guaranteed by the commanding officer; and that they would use every influence in their power to induce the people of the country at large to return to their allegiance also.'[1]

Accompanying these proposals was an urgent letter from Lord Kingsborough, supporting the offer of capitulation, which, he wrote, 'I hope, for the sake of the prisoners here, who are very numerous, and of the first respectability in the country, will be complied with. The people here have treated their prisoners with great humanity, and I believe will return to their allegiance with the greatest satisfaction.' In a postscript he adds: 'Since I have written the within (*sic*), the inhabitants have come to the resolution of investing the mayor, Dr. Jacob, in his authority, and have liberated all the prisoners. I at present command here, and have promised them the within terms will be agreed to.'[2]

Moore had no power to accept such a capitulation, but he at once transmitted these letters to General Lake, who replied by a blunt and absolute refusal. 'Lieutenant-General Lake,' he answered, 'cannot attend to any terms offered by rebels in arms against their sovereign. While they continue so, he must use the force entrusted to him with the utmost energy for their destruction. To the deluded multitude he promises pardon on their delivering into his hands their leaders, surrendering their arms, and returning with sincerity to their allegiance.'[3] This answer, however, was not

[1] Hay. See, too, Musgrave, pp. 498, 499.

[2] Record Office.

[3] *Annual Register*, 1798, p. 128. Hay, pp. 242–244. In a letter to Castlereagh, Lake says: 'You will see by the inclosed letter and address from Wexford, what an unpleasant situation I am led into by Lord Kingsborough.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 223.)

known in Wexford till after the surrender had been accomplished.

The situation there during all that day was perilous in the extreme. That morning the distant cannonade of the battle at Vinegar Hill was distinctly heard, and in a few hours the defeated rebels who had escaped, came pouring into the town by thousands. The worst consequences might be anticipated from the presence of this vast, disorganised, infuriated, and panic-stricken crowd, with arms in their hands; and Lord Kingsborough and Keugh, who appear to have acted in close concert, went in much alarm to the Catholic bishop. They represented that if the rebel army 'continued any time in the town, they would proceed to murder all the prisoners, . . . and that if the troops should overtake them in town, they would make a general slaughter of them, and perhaps indiscriminately of the inhabitants, and reduce the town to ashes; that the only means of preventing these shocking disasters, was to get the rebels out of town; that a strong representation of their own danger, and of Lord Kingsborough's negotiations with the military commanders and Government, would have more weight with the rebels than any exhortations or consideration of duty.'[1] By the combined exertions of Keugh and of the Catholic bishop and clergy, the rebel force was induced to leave the town, one portion marching into the barony of Forth, and the other in the opposite direction, crossing the bridge to the eastern side of the Slaney. Keugh, relying probably on the engagements of Lord Kingsborough, and determined at all hazards to use his great influence to the very last, to save the town from the imminent danger of massacre and plunder, refused to leave it; and chiefly through

[1] See Bishop Caulfield's statement of his conduct. (Plowden, ii. 738, 739.)

his efforts, that terrible day passed in Wexford unstained by blood. 'There was no prisoner put to death,' wrote Bishop Caulfield, 'no Protestant murdered, no houses burnt (though several of the rebels threatened, and some of them attempted to set fire to the town). No disaster took place, all was saved.'

Lord Kingsborough sent another messenger to General Moore, but he never reached his destination, for he was shot by a rebel whom he had met upon his way. General Moore soon arrived within a mile of Wexford, and could see the rebel army retreating, and he received one of the liberated prisoners, who gave him an assurance of the peaceful disposition of the townspeople. Moore's troops, like all who were employed in Wexford, were in a state of wild undiscipline, and in spite of the utmost efforts of the brave and humane commander, they had committed numerous outrages on their march. Moore, wishing to save Wexford, encamped his army beyond its borders; but Captain Boyd, the member for the town, entered it with a small number of yeomen, and was soon after followed by two companies of the Queen's Royals, who, without resistance, took possession of it. Thus, on June 21, Wexford once more passed under the dominion of the King, having been for twenty-three days in possession of the rebels.

If Moore, or any other general of ability, humanity, and tact, had held the supreme command in Wexford, the rebellion would probably have at once terminated. But now, as ever, Lake acted with a brutal, stupid, and undiscriminating severity, that was admirably calculated to intensify and to prolong the conflagration. The general rule that in rebellions, offers of clemency should be held out to the ignorant masses, while the leaders should be treated with severity, may be justified by evident considerations both of equity and of policy, but, like every maxim of political conduct, its application

should depend largely on the special circumstances of the case. There is a wide difference between men who have fomented, organised, and directed a rebellion, and men who, finding themselves in the midst of a rebellion which they had not made, were compelled, under pain of death, to take a leading part in it, or were induced to do so in order to prevent it from degenerating into a mere scene of massacre and plunder, or because they believed that they could not, in a time of danger, honourably abandon their people. In the great convulsions of the State, men should not be judged only on technical grounds of legal guilt, but rather by the general course of their conduct, motives, and influence. In most cases, no doubt, the peace of a nation is best secured by striking severely at the leaders of rebellion, but it is sometimes through clemency to these that it can be most speedily and most effectually restored.

Neither Lake nor Castlereagh showed the least regard for these considerations. The first proceeding of the commander-in-chief was to issue a proclamation for the arrest of the leaders, and Lord Kingsborough's negotiation had made this peculiarly easy. Father Philip Roche, perceiving the rebellion to be hopeless, desired to negotiate for his troops on the Three Rocks, a capitulation like that of the rebels at Wexford, and in order to do so, he boldly came down alone and unarmed. On his way he was seized, dragged off his horse, so kicked and buffeted, that he was said to have been scarcely recognisable, then tried by court-martial, and hanged on Wexford Bridge. He met his fate with a dogged defiant courage, declaring that the insurgents in Wexford had been deceived, that they had expected a general insurrection through Ireland, and that if the other counties had done their duty, they would have succeeded. Military men, who had watched the conduct of this priest during his short command, and who dis-

cussed the chief battles of the rebellion with him before his execution, are said to have come to the conclusion that he of all the rebel leaders was the most formidable, for he had a true eye for military combinations. The result of his arrest was that the main body of rebels on the Three Rocks, under the command of another priest, at once marched towards the county of Carlow, to add one more bloody page to the rebellion.[1]

Another, and a more interesting victim, was Matthew Keugh, the rebel governor of Wexford. Having refused to abandon the town, he was at the mercy of the Government, and he was at once tried by court-martial, and condemned to death. Musgrave has noticed the eminent dignity, eloquence, and pathos of his defence, and his unalterable courage in the face of death, and he seemed chiefly anxious to show that he had no part or lot in the massacre of Wexford Bridge. Lord Kingsborough, Colonel Le Hunte, and several other respectable witnesses came forward, and proved that he had acted on all occasions with singular humanity, that he had uniformly endeavoured to prevent the effusion of blood, and that they owed their lives to his active interference. It is certain, indeed, that it was mainly due to him that Wexford, until the day before its surrender, was almost unstained by the horrors that were so frequent at Vinegar Hill, and that its surrender was at last peacefully effected; and it is equally certain that Keugh had again and again risked his life in stemming the rising tide of fanaticism and blood. Urgent representations were made to Lake to take these circumstances into consideration, but Lake was determined to show his firmness. Keugh was hanged on Wexford Bridge; his head was severed from his

[1] Compare Plowden, ii. 763; Musgrave, p. 507; and the remarks of the 'Field Officer' in Maxwell, p. 141.

body, and fixed on a pike before the court house in Wexford, while his body was thrown into the river.

In a strictly legal point of view, the position of Lake was no doubt unassailable, and this was probably the only consideration that presented itself to his mind. It is clear that Lord Kingsborough had no authority to pledge the Government to spare the lives and properties of the Wexford insurgents, though by making this engagement he probably saved the town from destruction, and the prisoners and other Protestant inhabitants from murder. It is clear, too, that Keugh had been a leading figure in the rebellion, and the fact that he had risen by his ability during the American war from the position of private to that of captain in the King's army, and was actually in the receipt of half-pay when the rebellion broke out, aggravated his situation. Nor is it likely that he was one of those who joined reluctantly, fearing death if they refused. In America his mind, like that of many others, had received a republican bias. His sympathy with the United Irishmen had been long avowed, and had led to his removal from the magistracy in 1796, and all accounts represent him as a man of commanding courage and conspicuous ability, much more likely to influence than to be influenced. There is no proof that he instigated the rebellion; but when it had taken place, and when he found himself called by acclamation to a post of prominence and danger, he unhesitatingly accepted it. How he acted in a position which was one of the most difficult that could fall to any human being, has been already told. In some cases, no doubt, as in the execution of the Murphys and the surrender of the Enniscorthy prisoners, he was compelled to yield to an irresistible clamour; but on the whole, the ascendency which this humane and moderate Protestant gentleman maintained in Wexford during three terrible weeks, in

which the surrounding country had been made a hideous scene of mutual carnage, forms one of the few bright spots in the dark and shameful history I am relating. He was a man of competent fortune, well connected, and exceedingly popular, and his persuasive eloquence, as well as a great personal beauty, which is said to have survived even in death,[1] no doubt contributed to his influence. It is scarcely probable that it could have continued. In the last days of his rule it was visibly waning, and Keugh is himself said to have predicted that he would not have lived forty-eight hours after the complete triumph of the rebellion. He received the consolations of religion from the clergyman of Wexford, who had been preserved by his protection, and he died declaring that his only object had been to reform and improve the Constitution.[2]

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[1] Barrington was at Wexford shortly after the rebellion, and saw the heads of the leaders outside the court house. He says: 'The mutilated countenances of friends and relations in such a situation would, it may be imagined, give any man most horrifying sensations! The heads of Colclough and Harvey appeared black lumps, the features being utterly undistinguishable; that of Keogh was uppermost, but the air had made no impression on it whatever. His comely and respect-inspiring face (except the pale hue, scarcely to be called livid), was the same as in life. His eyes were not closed, his hair not much ruffled—in fact, it appeared to me rather as a head of chiselled marble, with glass eyes, than as the lifeless remains of a human creature. This circumstance I never could get any medical man to give the least explanation of.' (Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, i. 276, 277.)

[2] Interesting notices of Keugh will be found in Gordon, Taylor, Jackson, and Musgrave. Compare, too, the vivid sketch in Barrington's *Personal Recollections*, iii. 296–298. Keugh had an elder brother—an enthusiastic loyalist—who lived with him. When the rebellion broke out, and Matthew Keugh became a rebel leader, the loyalist brother was driven to such despair, that he blew out his own brains. In spelling the name of the Wexford governor, I have followed most of the Wexford writers, as well as Musgrave and Lord Castlereagh; but Barrington (who was related to him) calls him Keogh; and Taylor, Keughe.

Several other executions either accompanied or immediately followed the executions of Roche and Keugh, but only three need be referred to here. There was Cornelius Grogan, the infirm and almost half-witted, but very wealthy, country gentleman, who had been brought into Wexford immediately after its surrender to the rebels. Though he had once been an Opposition member of Parliament, and though he was on friendly terms with some persons who joined in the rebellion, nothing in his former life or conversation gave the slightest reason for believing that he had any sympathy with the United Irishmen, or any knowledge of their plans, until the day when he found his place occupied by the rebels, and himself a prisoner in their hands. Whether he was compelled by force to join them, or whether, as was maintained by the Government, he was induced to do so in order to save his house from plunder and his property from ultimate confiscation, it is difficult to say. An old, feeble invalid, with no strength of intellect or character, he was very passive in their hands. He was quite incapable of appearing in the field or, indeed, of holding a weapon, but the rebels gave him the title of commissary—it is said, through the belief that this would make his numerous tenants more willing to supply them—and it was proved that he signed an order for a woman to receive some bread from the rebel stores. After the surrender of Wexford, he was carried back to his own country house, where he made no attempt to conceal himself. He was at once seized; tried and condemned by a court-martial which appears to have been in many respects exceedingly irregular, and hanged off Wexford Bridge. The spectacle of this feeble old man, with his long white hair streaming over his shoulders, wrapped in flannels and tottering on his crutches painfully but very placidly to the gallows, was certainly not fitted to

inspire the people with much reverence for the law, and it is said that Bagenal Harvey, who was executed at the same time, openly declared that, whoever might be guilty, Grogan at least was wholly innocent. Like Sir Edward Crosbie, he had an old faithful servant, who stole his head from the pike on which it was transfixed, and secured for it a Christian burial.[1]

Bagenal Harvey at first believed that the engagement of Lord Kingsborough would secure his life, and retired from Wexford to his own country house; but on learning that no terms would be granted to the leaders, he fled with a young and popular country gentleman named John Colclough, a member of one of the leading families in Wexford, who like himself had taken part in the rebellion. The two fugitives, together with the wife and child of Colclough, were concealed in a cavern in one of the Saltee Islands, but were soon discovered and brought to Wexford. They were both undoubtedly guilty of treason. Colclough, though he had taken no prominent part in the rebellion, and had certainly no concern in any of its atrocities, had been in the rebel ranks in the battle of New Ross. Bagenal Harvey, as we have seen, had been marked out by his known and avowed sympathies as a leader of the rebellion in Wexford, and had been for a short time its

[1] A number of facts from different quarters about Grogan, have been brought together by Dr. Madden. (*United Irishmen*, iv. 502–513.) Compare Musgrave, pp. 447, 448; Appendix, p. 135. Barrington, who had known Grogan intimately for several years, declares most emphatically that he was 'no more a rebel than his brothers, who signalised themselves in battle as loyalists;' and he speaks very strongly of the illegal constitution of the court-martial that tried him. (*Personal Recollections*, iii. 298–300.) There is an elaborate examination, and a very severe condemnation of this court-martial, in a privately printed law book, called *Reports of Interesting Cases argued in Ireland* (1824), by R. Radford Rowe. A long chapter is devoted to the Irish courts-martial.

acknowledged commander-in-chief. His claims, however, to the clemency of the Government were very powerful. When Wexford was first threatened by the rebels, the King's representative in it had not hesitated to implore Harvey to use his influence to obtain favourable terms, and it was chiefly through that influence that the capture of the town had been almost unstained by blood. His acceptance of the post of commander of the rebels, was probably quite as much due to compulsion as to his desire. He saved many lives, and he steadily set his face against murder and outrage. It is, however, one of the worst features of the repression in Ireland, that such considerations were scarcely ever attended to, and were sometimes even made use of against the prisoner. 'The display of humanity by a rebel,' writes the most temperate and most truthful of the loyal historians, 'was in general, in the trials by court-martial, by no means regarded as a circumstance in favour of the accused. Strange as it may seem in times of cool reflection, it was very frequently urged as a proof of guilt. Whoever could be proved to have saved a loyalist from assassination, his house from burning, or his property from plunder, was considered as having influence among the rebels, consequently a rebel commander.'[1]

Bagenal Harvey had acquired the reputation of a very brave man, but he appears now to have been completely unnerved. He was sunk in the deepest dejection, and his demeanour contrasted somewhat remarkably with that of Roche, Keugh, Grogan, and Colclough. The massacre of Scullabogue seems to have broken his heart, and from that time he had little

[1] Gordon, p. 187; see, too, Appendix, p. 85. Gordon relates the exclamation of one of the rebels: 'I thank my God, that no person can prove me guilty of saving the life or property of anyone.'

influence, and no hope in the struggle. Like Keugh, and like Bishop Caulfield, too, he appears to have been firmly convinced that a spirit had arisen among the rebels which, if not speedily checked, must turn the movement into a general massacre—a massacre not only of loyalists and Protestants, but also of the most respectable and the most moderate of its leaders.[1] He stated in his defence, that he had accepted the command of the rebellion chiefly in order to prevent it from falling into much more dangerous hands; that he had done his best to keep it within the bounds of humanity; that he had seen with horror the crimes and the fanaticism it had engendered, and that he had always been ready to accede to proposals for restoring order and government. Few things, indeed, can be sadder than the death of a leader, who is conscious in his last moments that the cause for which he dies was a mistaken one, and that its triumph would have been a calamity to his country. Bagenal Harvey was not a wise or a superior man, but he was humane, honourable, and well-meaning, and it is not probable that motives of personal interest or ambition played any great part in shaping his unhappy career.

[1] 'In the local and short-lived insurrection in the county of Wexford, the tendency of affairs was so evident to Bagenal Harvey and other Protestant leaders, that they considered their doom as inevitable, and even some Romish commanders expressed apprehensions. Thus, Esmond Kyan, one of the most brave and generous among them, declared to Richard Dowse, a Protestant gentleman of the county of Wicklow, whom he had rescued from assassins, that his own life was irredeemably forfeited; for if the rebellion should succeed, his own party would murder him; and if it should not succeed, his fate must be death by martial law—which happened, according to his prediction. Even Philip Roche, whose character as a priest might be supposed to insure his safety with his own followers, made a similar declaration to Walter Greene, a Protestant gentleman of the county of Wexford, whose life he had protected.' (Gordon's *History*, pp. 210, 211.)

Courts-martial, followed by immediate executions, were now taking place in many parts of the county. Sixty-five persons were hanged on Wexford Bridge on the charge of either having taken a leading part in the rebellion, or being concerned in some of the acts of murder that accompanied it;[1] but Dixon, the author of the Wexford massacre, was not among them, for he succeeded in escaping, and was never heard of again. The executions, however, were far less horrible than the indiscriminate burning of houses and slaughter of unarmed men, and even of women, by the troops. They were now everywhere hunting down the rebels, who had dispersed by thousands after the battle of Vinegar Hill and the surrender of Wexford, and who vainly sought a refuge in their cabins. Discipline had almost wholly gone. Military licence was perfectly unrestrained, and the massacres which had taken place—magnified a hundredfold by report—had produced a savage thirst for blood. The rebel historians draw ghastly pictures of the stripped, mutilated, often disembowelled bodies, that lined the roads and lay thick around the burning villages, and they say that long after peace had returned, women and children in Wexford fled, scared as by an evil spirit, at the sight of a British uniform.[2] The sober and temperate colouring of the loyalist historian I have so often quoted, is scarcely less impressive. 'From the commencement of the rebellion,' writes Gordon, 'soldiers, yeomen, and supplementaries, frequently executed without any trial such as they judged worthy of death, even persons found unarmed in their own

[1] See the list in Musgrave's Appendix, 160. These executions, however, extended over the whole period from June 21, 1798, to Dec. 18, 1800. Gordon states that nine leaders were hanged on June 25; three others on the 28th. Four only of these leaders were Protestants. (Pp. 180–184.)

[2] See Hay, pp. 243, 247, &c.

houses.' 'I have reason to think that more men than fell in battle, were slain in cold blood. No quarter was given to persons taken prisoners as rebels, with or without arms.' 'The devastations and plundering sustained by the loyalists were not the work of the rebels alone. Great part of the damage was committed by the soldiery, who commonly completed the ruin of deserted houses in which they had their quarters, and often plundered without distinction of loyalist and croppy. The Hessians exceeded the other troops in the business of depredation, and many loyalists who had escaped from the rebels were put to death by these foreigners.'[1]

In two respects the conduct of the troops compared very unfavourably with that of the rebels. Though the latter had committed great numbers of atrocious murders, it is acknowledged on all sides that they abstained to a most remarkable degree from outrages on women,[2] while on the other side this usual incident of military licence was terribly frequent. Although, too, it is quite certain that the rebellion assumed in Wexford much of the character of a savage religious war, and that numbers of Protestants were murdered who had given no real cause of offence except their religion, the rebels very rarely directed their animosity against Protestant places of worship. The church of Old Ross

[1] Gordon, pp. 188, 197, 222. Hay fully agrees with Gordon in giving the first place in these atrocities to the 'Hompesch Dragoons.' (P. 247.) I may mention that, in 1770, Lord Chatham had suggested that, if Ireland was ever invaded by a powerful foreign army, with arms ready to be put into the hands of the Roman Catholics, the task of defending it should be largely entrusted to a subsidised force of German Protestants. (Thackeray's *Life of Chatham*, ii. 222.)

[2] Compare Gordon, pp. 213, 214; Hay, p. 247. Gordon says he has 'not been able to ascertain an instance to the contrary in the county of Wexford, though many beautiful young women were absolutely in the power of the rebels.'

was, I believe, the only one that they deliberately burnt, though in the general conflagrations that took place, a few others may have been destroyed or plundered. But there were large districts over which not a Catholic chapel was left standing by the troops, and Archbishop Troy drew up a list of no less than thirty-six that were destroyed in only six counties of Leinster.[1]

Apart, indeed, from the courage which was often displayed on both sides, the Wexford rebellion is a dreary and an ignoble story, with much to blame and very little to admire. It is like a page from the history of the Thirty Years' War, of the suppression of La Vendée, of a Turkish war, or of a war of races in India, though happily its extreme horrors extended only over a small area, and lasted only for a few weeks. Though fanaticism played some part, and revenge a great part, in the terrors of the repression, the remarkable concurrence of both loyal and disloyal writers in attributing the worst excesses to Germans and Welshmen, who had never been mixed up in Irish quarrels, seems to show that mere unchecked military licence was stronger than either, and there appears to have been little or no difference in point of ferocity between the Irish yeomanry, who were chiefly Protestant, and the Irish militia, who were chiefly Catholic.[2] Such a state of things was only possible by a shameful neglect of duty on the part of commanding officers, and the fact that it was not universal, proves that it was

[1] See many statistics about chapel-burning in Madden, i. 349–351. Gordon says that hardly one chapel in the extent of several miles round Gorey escaped burning. (Pp. 199, 200.) Bishop Caulfield, in his pamphlet in reply to the misrepresentations of Sir R. Musgrave, said: 'In the extent of nearly fifty miles from Bray to Wexford, almost every Roman Catholic chapel was laid in ashes.' (P. ii.)

[2] See the very emphatic statements of Lord Cornwallis. (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 357, 369.)

not inevitable. Gordon has left the most emphatic testimony to the excellent discipline and perfect humanity of the Scotch Highlanders, who were commanded by Lord Huntley, and of the Durham Fencible Infantry, who mere commanded by Colonel Skerrit, and a few other names are remembered with honour.[1] But in general the military excesses were very shameful, and they did much to rival and much to produce the crimes of the insurgents.

By this time, however, a great change had taken place in the Government of Ireland. We have seen that Lord Camden had long wished to be relieved from his heavy burden, and had represented that in the present dangerous situation of the country the office of Lord Lieutenant and the office of Commander-in-Chief should be united in the person of some skilful and popular general. The Government at last acceded to his wish, and Lord Cornwallis, who, in spite of the disaster of Yorktown, was regarded as the ablest of the English generals in the American war, was induced to accept the double post. He arrived in Dublin on June 20, and his administration opens a new and very memorable page in the history of Ireland.

[1] Gordon, pp. 197, 198.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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